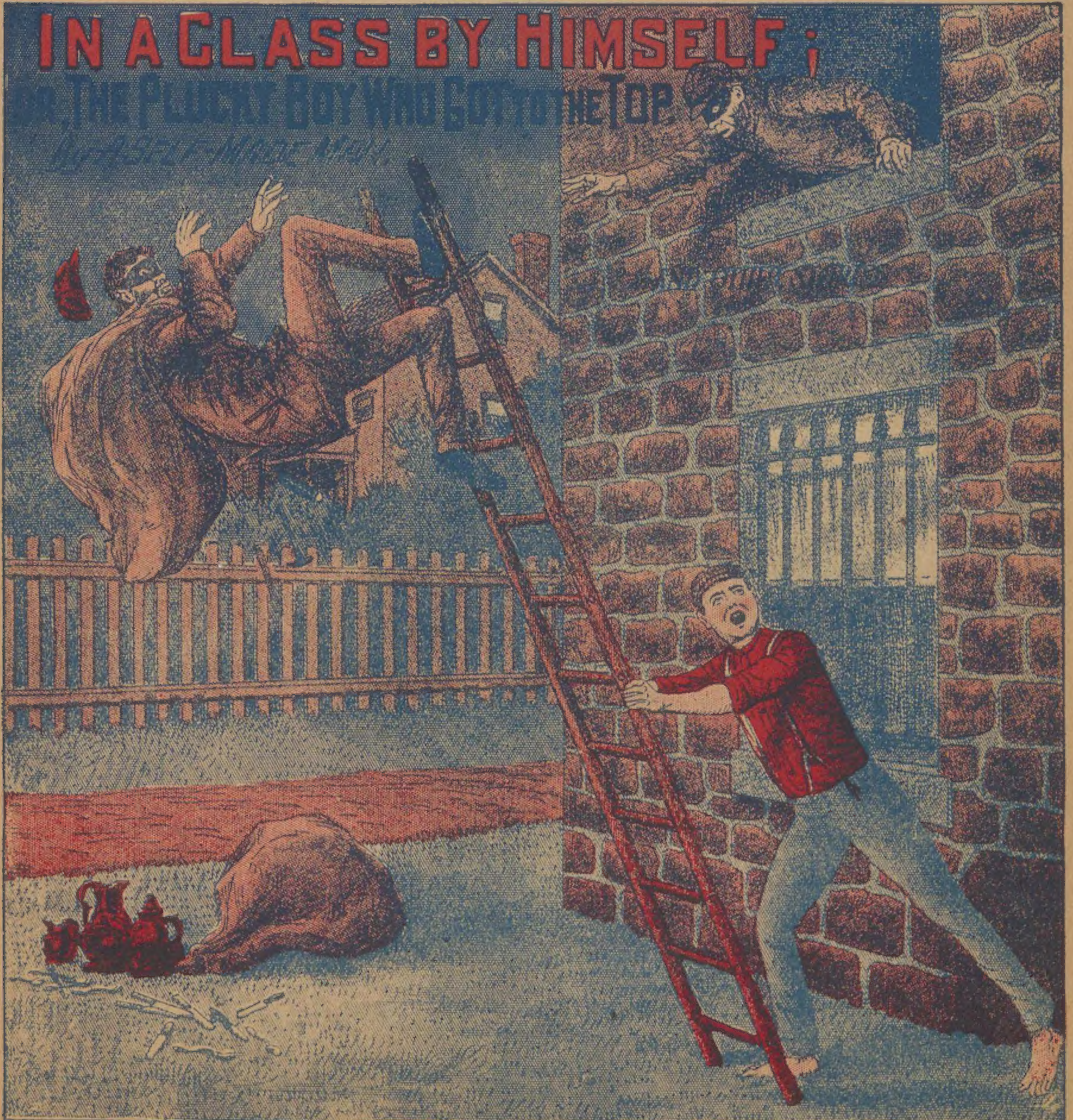


FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.



Jack reached the corner of the building just as one of the burglars, with a bag of plunder over his shoulder, started to descend the ladder. The boy, shouting for help, sprang under the ladder and pushed it backward.

1927 AUG 2 FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

Issued weekly—Subscription price, \$4.00 per year! Canada, \$4.50; Foreign, \$5.00. Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, inc., 160 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y. Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 4, 1911, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

No. 1073

NEW YORK, APRIL 23, 1926

Price 8 Cents.

IN A CLASS BY HIMSELF

OR, THE PLUCKY BOY WHO GOT TO THE TOP

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—In Which Jack Stone Averts A Tragedy.

"Jack! Jack Stone!" shouted the postmaster of Battersby Village from the doorway of his general store, which was also the postoffice.

"Hello!" replied a sturdy, bright-looking boy of seventeen who was passing. What is it, Mr. Gates?"

"Step in here. I've got a letter for your mother."

"A letter for my mother!" exclaimed Jack in some surprise, for his mother was not often favored with communications from the outside world.

"Yes. It came in this morning's mail," answered the postmaster.

"All right," said Jack. "I'm going right home. Of course it's from Aunt Sue," he muttered as he entered the store. The postmaster retired behind the counter to a corner fenced in by a case of pigeon-holes, the outer ends of which were covered with glass and painted from A to Z with the letters of the alphabet.

"Here it is," said Mr. Gates, after running over a small bunch of letters which he took from the compartment labeled R-S.

He tossed the letter to Jack, who picked it up and then noticed that it was not addressed in his aunt's handwriting. The superscription was in a man's hand, and read. "Mrs. William Stone, Battersby, Minn."

His aunt never addressed her letters otherwise than "Mrs. Mary Stone."

"I wonder who this can be from?" Jack mused, as he tried in vain to decipher the postmark.

"Your mother doesn't get a letter very often, does she?" said the postmaster with a curious intonation to his voice. "And this one is addressed differently from those she has been getting."

Jack thought that Mr. Gates had a long memory to keep track of the matter. He also noticed that the envelope bore thumb marks in several places as if it had been handled two or three times in a very deliberate way.

"Where did it come from?" asked Jack.

"That's what I couldn't make out. The stamp is too dim. It ain't from the East, though," said the postmaster wagged his head in a positive way. "Has your mother got a brother somewhere west of Chicago?"

"No."

Mr. Gates scratched his chin whiskers and looked thoughtfully at the envelope in the boy's hand.

"Mebbe it's from some lawyer notifying her that she's come into a bit of property," suggested the postmaster, his eyes twinkling with curiosity.

"Not much likelihood of that," said Jack as he put the letter in his pocket.

"You never can tell what may happen in this world," went on Mr. Gates. "I knew a man once who——"

The entrance of a customer at that moment interrupted the postmaster's reminiscent remarks, and Jack took advantage of the chance to leave the store and continue on his way home. Jack and his mother lived in a small, neat looking cottage on the other side of the fork. There were twenty acres of land attached to the house, and with a thousand dollars life insurance, had come to Mrs. Stone at her husband's death. There were two tracks on the bridge and between them was a plank walk wide enough for two persons. When Jack reached the bridge he heard the whistle of the west-bound afternoon express on the other side of the river.

Jack decided to wait till the flyer had passed the bridge which would be in a minute or two, but happening to glance straight ahead he saw a sight that made him change his mind. A man who had been walking rather unsteadily toward the footpath lost his balance and toppled over on to the track by which the express was coming.

"Good gracious! He'll be killed!" cried Jack, much excited by the prospect of a tragedy right under his eyes. "I must save him if I can. I haven't got a moment to lose, either."

Jack took the footway at a bound and dashed forward to the rescue. The boy reached the man just as the express hove in sight around a curve beyond the bridge and slackened its speed a bit according to regulations, but not enough to have brought the heavy train to a standstill before reaching the place where the imperilled person lay. In fact, the engineer hadn't yet caught sight of the human obstruction on the track, and the first intimation he had of the fact was when Jack stepped over on to the track, and pluckily started to raise the man from his dangerous position and pull him over on to the footpath. The

engineer with a gasp threw over the reverse, pulled the throttle clear out, applied the airbrakes throughout the train, dropped sand on the rails, and then sent a wild curdling shriek from the whistle echoing across the landscape. None of these expedients would have availed to save the man's life had not Jack been there on the spot to aid him with his strong young arms. The boy, though facing a great peril himself, for the ponderous locomotive was bearing down on him with considerable speed in spite of everything the engineer could do, was never cooler in all his life. Jack had barely time to shove him over onto the plank walk and fall over beside him when the locomotive swept past, with engineer and fireman looking down at them out of the cab window.

The train gradually came to a rest, half on and half off the bridge, and conductor and brakemen started back for the spot where Jack had succeeded in getting the man on his feet and was leading him toward the eastern side of the river. Jack now saw that the man whose life he had saved was handsomely attired, with a heavy gold chain, to which was attached a massive locket, across his white vest. His silk hat had gone into the river and been swept out of sight. His age was apparently close on to sixty, for there were many crow's-feet under his eyes, and his hair was thickly streaked with iron-gray. He seemed to be a man of means and of some importance in the world.

"You had a pretty close shave that time, sir," said Jack, as he steadied the gentleman on the footpath.

The man seemed to realize that fact in a dazed kind of way.

"You saved my life, boy, and I sha'n't forget it," he replied.

"I guess I did, sir, and I'm glad I was at hand to be of service to you. How came you to fall over on the track? It's a wonder you didn't go down into the river."

"I'm occasionally subject to dizzy spells. They take me when I least expect them. It's some time now since I had the last attack, and I was congratulating myself on being happily rid of them, but I've been shouting before I was out of the wood. I will sit down and rest as soon as I get on solid ground again."

"My mother's cottage is only a short distance away. You can rest there as long as you wish."

"Thank you. I will avail myself of the opportunity."

The conductor and trainmen now caught up with them. The former wanted to learn all the particulars of the case, as he had to report the matter to the general office. The gentleman, who said his name was Roger Prior, made the same explanation of his infirmity to the conductor as he had to Jack, with a few additional particulars. He was visiting at Squire Bates's home in Battersby, he said, and was taking a walk across the railroad bridge, without any suspicions that he would have an attack of his malady, when his senses suddenly left him, and the next thing he knew he was being lifted from in front of the approaching express by the brave lad by his side.

"That was a plucky act of yours, young man, and I have no doubt the railroad company will take notice of it, for you have saved it a good deal of expense and trouble. What is your name?" asked the conductor.

"Jack Stone."

"Where do you live?"

"In that white cottage you can see yonder through the trees."

"You reside with your parents, I presume?"

"I live with my mother. My father is dead."

The conductor put his notes in his pocket, congratulated the gentleman on his fortunate escape, and with his train hands returned to the cars and signalled the train to go on.

CHAPTER II.—Which Introduces Dicky Locke.

By the time Jack and Mr. Prior reached the cottage gate the gentleman was able to walk without assistance. Mrs. Stone, glancing through the sitting-room window, saw her son and his elderly companion advancing up the walk. She wondered who the gentleman was, and went to the front door opening on the shady piazza to admit them.

"Mother, this is Mr. Roger Prior, a visitor at the village. He is stopping with Squire Bates."

Mrs. Stone bowed and invited Mr. Prior to walk in.

"Thank you, madam, I will for a few minutes. It will probably surprise you to learn that I owe my life to your son."

"Owe your life to my Jack!" exclaimed the little woman in astonishment.

"Yes, madam. I was crossing the railroad bridge just before the express came along, and was attacked by a kind of fainting spell. I fell over on the track just as the train hove in sight, and must have been crushed beneath the wheels of the locomotive and cars, only your son was providentially at hand to aid me. He is certainly a plucky lad, and I shall reward him for the great service he rendered me."

"I don't want any reward, sir," replied Jack. "I only did my duty in saving you from being killed."

"Well, we won't argue the matter now, my boy. I'll rest a bit till my nerves are steady again, and then I'll return to Mr. Bates's house."

"I'll accompany you if you wish me to, sir," said Jack.

"You may see me across the bridge. It will not be necessary for you to go any further, my lad."

While his mother entertained their visitor, Jack went out to the kitchen to tell Dicky Locke, a sprightly miss of fifteen, who worked for his mother, the particulars of his adventure on the bridge.

"My goodness, Jack!" she exclaimed when he finished. "You might have got run over yourself."

"I don't know," he replied. "I was looking out for myself after a fashion."

"Suppose the locomotive had struck you," she said with a sober look.

"What's the use of supposing what didn't happen, Dicky?" laughed the boy.

"I think you were very reckless."

"I had to take chances to save the gentleman."

"He ought not to have gone on the bridge if he's subject to fainting fits."

"You and I do things sometimes we ought not to do."

"What do I do that I ought not to do?" she asked pertly.

"Are you anxious to know?" he grinned.

"Yes, I am."

"Come here till I whisper in your ear."

"What do you want to whisper for?"

"I'll show you. Do you see that churn in the corner?"

"Yes."

"Don't take your eyes off it for ten seconds."

Jack reached his head around and kissed her on her red lips.

"Oh!" she screamed. "I'll pay you for that."

She swung her hand at Jack's face, but the boy ducked and put the table between them.

"How did you like it?" he asked with a chuckle.

"Just you wait till I catch you, and I'll show you how I liked it."

Then she began to chase Jack around the table, but though she was mighty spry she couldn't catch him. At last she stopped, out of breath and red from her exertions.

"You're a mean thing, Jack Stone," she cried, tossing her shapely head.

"Don't you call me hard names or I'll kiss you again," he said.

"You wouldn't dare."

"Wouldn't I? Watch me."

Then he started to chase her around the table. She skipped about like a startled fawn and eluded him until he suddenly sprang clean over the small table and grabbed her. She screamed and hid her face in her arms, but he didn't care for that. He held her close in his arms till he got her arms down, and then pulling her head down on his shoulder he gave her two smacks and released her.

"I think you're too rude for anything," she said, blushing like a June rose.

"If you want to give them back to me I'll let you," he said laughingly.

"The idea! Just as if I would!" she replied poutingly.

"Jack," said his mother, looking into the room at that moment, "Mr. Prior is going."

"All right, mother, I'll come right in," said Jack, then turning to Dicky he said: "Are you going to return those smacks or are you going to keep them?"

Dicky said nothing and walked over to the stove.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed. "I believe the biscuits are burning."

She hurriedly threw open the stove door and pulled the pan out. She saw that they would have been burned in another minute.

"Well," he said, "that's one of the things you oughtn't to do—let the biscuits burn."

"It would have been your fault if they had," she flashed back at him.

"All right. We'll let it at that. You may kiss me when I get back."

She grabbed up a towel and threw it at him, but it only hit the door, for by that time he was on the other side. After escorting Mr. Prior to the other end of the railroad bridge Jack returned to the cottage. When he got back supper was on the table, and the hired man was washing his face and hands at the sink in the kitchen. Jack proceeded to tell the man, whose name was John Meiggs, about how he had saved Roger Prior's life at the bridge. In the middle of the story Dicky called them to supper, and Jack finished his narrative at the table. At length supper was finished, Meiggs got up and went to the barn, Dicky clear-

ed the table and Jack and his mother were left alone in the room.

"Oh, I've got a letter for you, mother," he said, suddenly remembering about it. "That affair of the bridge drove it out of my head."

"A letter!" she exclaimed. "From my sister."

"No, mother. It isn't from Aunt Sue. It's from some man."

"A man!" said the little woman in surprise.

"It's addressed in a man's handwriting at any rate. Here it is," and he handed it to her.

The moment she looked at the superscription she turned pale and showed signs of much agitation.

CHAPTER III.—In Which Jack Receives A Valuable Gift.

"What's wrong, mother? Do you think that letter contains bad news?" asked Ted.

"It's from your father's brother, your Uncle Edward."

"Don't call him my uncle," said the boy quickly. "I'd rather be excused from acknowledging the relationship."

"He is your uncle, nevertheless, and my brother-in-law," said the little woman soberly.

"Unfortunately, he is. Why don't you open it and see what he has to say? It's from the State prison, I suppose. I wonder why he took the trouble to write you? I think he's got a pretty big nerve after the way he's disgraced the family name. We don't want to have anything to do with him any more."

Mrs. Stone opened the letter. After reading a few lines she looked at her son in a startled way.

"He's coming here," she said with an anxious look in her eyes.

"Why should he come here, mother? We don't want him. When does he expect to be released?"

"He is already out of the penitentiary. His term has been shortened by three years and four months for good behavior."

"Oh, it has? And he's coming here. Well, that's fierce! Why should he think of annoying us with his presence?"

His mother read the letter through and then tendered it to him.

"Read it for yourself, Jack," she said.

The boy scanned the letter, which ran as follows:

"CRESSON, MINN., May 16.

"DEAR SISTER-IN-LAW: You will doubtless be surprised to receive this letter from one who has been dead to the world for six years and eight months, but as I expect to pay you a visit in a few days to renew old associations I thought it about the right thing to advise you of my purpose beforehand. I am sorry that William will not be on hand to kill the fatted calf in honor of my return to life, but perhaps it's just as well as it is, since his evidence helped to make me a pensioner on the bounty of the State, under which circumstances our meeting might have been somewhat strained, and perhaps led to unpleasant results. I hope it may not be necessary for me to remain long under your hospitable roof-tree, which circumstances compel me to avail myself of. You can make it as short as you please by coming up

with a bunch of the needful. My brother left you his property and \$1,000 insurance money. I suppose that you haven't as yet spent any of the latter, and half of it would just about give me the lift I want to New York. At any rate, I must have some money and I advise you to see about getting it for me. Don't disappoint me in this particular, as prison discipline hasn't improved my amiable disposition, and if I am rubbed the wrong way something unpleasant might happen. Thanking you in advance for the generous hospitality I know you are yearning to bestow on me, and for such financial contribution as your good sense and prudence will naturally suggest, I remain,

"Yours very truly,
"EDWARD STONE, ESQ."

"I consider that a most insulting letter, mother," said Jack indignantly. "It is as good as a threat to extort money from you. If I were you I'd positively refuse to admit him to the house, and if he insisted on forcing himself on you I'd have the head constable of the village give him a strong hint that the sooner he retired from the neighborhood for good the better it would be for him."

"That would only advertise the family disgrace before our neighbors, who do not know that my husband's brother has been an inmate of a penitentiary for nearly seven years. I dread to think what people would say if they learned the truth."

"But you will not give him any of your insurance money, mother," said Jack. "It is but a small provision for a rainy day. The income from this little property is only sufficient to support us. It is an outrage for him to expect you to help him. I guess he's strong and hearty enough to help himself."

"No, I have no intention of giving him any of that money; but I can hardly turn him away if he comes here and demands our hospitality. I dread to think of him being an inmate of this house, yet I see no way of avoiding his presence if he chooses to force himself upon us."

"It's tough, mother, but I suppose we are up against it and must do the best we can under the circumstances. We must try to get rid of him as soon as we can and as easily as we can. He has no claim whatever on you, and I sha'n't allow him to impose on you."

Next morning, soon after breakfast, Jack and his mother were surprised by the appearance of Squire Bates's gardener with a note which requested them, as a special favor, to meet Roger Prior at the squire's office in the village at eleven o'clock.

"I wonder what Mr. Prior wishes to see us both about at Squire Bates's office?" said Jack in some perplexity. "If it is to pay me for saving his life I shall certainly refuse his money. There are some things in this world that in my opinion money cannot pay for, and one of them is the saving of a human life. Mr. Prior is welcome to the service I rendered him. If he wishes to give me some small token of his appreciation I shall accept it, but he can't pay me in dollars and cents."

So at half-past ten they left the house and walked to the village, reaching the squire's office at about eleven, where they found the justice and Mr. Prior awaiting them in the private room. They were told to be seated.

"Now, Jack," said Squire Bates, after he had

complimented the boy on his presence of mind and plucky conduct at the bridge on the previous afternoon, "Mr. Prior insists on making you some substantial acknowledgment of the invaluable service that you rendered him yesterday. Of course he understands that he cannot offer to pay you for that service, for he knows that you would not accept money from him."

"That's right," nodded the boy.

"He hopes, however, that you will not refuse to accept a gift from him that may be of some intrinsic value in the future. The gift in question is a small tract of land in Blank Township, State of Montana. It came into Mr. Prior's possession some years ago in settlement of a debt, and as he has no particular use for it, though it probably will become valuable in the course of time, he is of the opinion that he cannot show his gratitude in a better way than by transferring this property on you. You are young and in the course of nature have many years of usefulness ahead of you. By the time you are a man the property will doubtless have become a valuable asset to you, and may be the means of giving you a good start in life. As you are a minor it will be necessary for Mr. Prior to deed this property to your mother, who is your natural guardian, in trust for you, that is why we requested her presence here this morning in order that all the legal requirements of the transfer be complied with. I presume you have no objection to accepting this gift in the spirit in which Mr. Prior offers it to you?" concluded the squire.

Jack looked at his mother and then at the two gentlemen.

"Well, if Mr. Prior insists on giving it to me I have no objection to accepting the gift," replied Jack.

Mr. Prior looked pleased and said that nothing remained to be done except transfer the property to Mrs. Stone under a deed of trust. The said deed had already been drawn up and was signed by Mr. Prior in the presence of witnesses, Squire Bates signing the notary's acknowledgment of the gentleman's signature, and affixing thereto his official seal. Squire Bates then said he would have the deed duly recorded at the court house of the county seat of Blank County, and would have the property surveyed so that its exact boundaries would be settled beyond any doubt.

"When the deed shall have been returned to me, together with the survey, I will send them out to you by messenger, Mrs. Stone," concluded the justice.

That finished the business, and after thanking Mr. Prior for his gift, Jack and his mother left the Squire's office.

CHAPTER IV.—Which Introduces Edward Stone.

A week passed away and nothing more was heard from Edward Stone. They expected to see him make his appearance any day, and his coming was awaited with no little anxiety and distrust by Jack and his mother. Jack was employed as a clerk and general assistant by Mr. Whalen, the village auctioneer, real estate agent and insurance agent of the village. He received \$5 a week for his services, and this money he never failed

to turn over to his mother every Saturday when he reached home.

One afternoon, about ten days after the receipt of Edward Stone's letter, Jack accompanied Mr. Whalen to a farm that was going to be sold out in a few days. They were going to make an inventory of the stock, fixtures and other personal property that was to come under the hammer. Jack carried a memorandum book in which he noted down each article as his employer called it off to him, together with Mr. Whalen's estimate of its value, which the auctioneer was accustomed to use as a guide when the sale came off. This work took about three hours and it was nearly dark by the time they got back to Mr. Whalen's house in the village. Jack then started to walk out to his own home. As the boy approached the railroad bridge he saw the indistinct figures of three men sitting on a log by the roadside. One of them jumped up and came toward him.

"Hold on, boy, I want to see you a moment," he said.

"Well," replied Jack, stopping, "what do you want?"

"You live around here, I suppose?" said the man.

"I do."

"Whereabouts?"

"On the other side of the river."

"Then maybe you know where Mrs. William Stone lives?"

Jack gave a slight start and looked keenly at his questioner. Was this man his uncle, Edward Stone, whom he and his mother were expecting?

"Why don't you answer me?" asked the stranger sharply.

"I was wondering whether or not your name is Edward Stone," replied Jack.

It was the stranger's turn to start and look hard at the boy.

"Who are you, young fellow, and what put such an idea into your head?"

"My name is Jack Stone, and——"

"Oh, I see," interrupted the stranger with an odd chuckle. "So you're my nephew? I never should have known you, you've grown so. The last time I saw you you wasn't much more than ten years old, now you're an uncommonly big kid."

"Then you are my father's brother, Edward Stone?"

"That's who I am. Aren't you glad to see me? Come, shake hands."

"No, I can't say that I'm glad to see you," replied Jack frankly.

"Too proud to shake hands with me, are you?" said Edward Stone with a sneer.

"No, I'm not too proud, but I don't care to do it."

"Oh, you don't? Prejudiced against me because I've been unfortunate."

Jack made no reply.

"Are you going home?" said his uncle in a sour tone.

"I am."

"Very good. I'll go with you, then. I suppose your mother is expecting me?"

"I believe she is," answered the boy coldly.

"How about the fatted calf? Is it waiting for me?" asked Edward Stone with an unpleasant grin, hardly perceptible to the lad in the gloom.

"I don't see that you have any right to expect my mother to welcome you," said the boy calmly.

"Well, that's cool, upon my word. Ain't I her brother-in-law and your uncle?"

"I believe you are."

"You believe! Don't you know?" demanded the man angrily.

"If you are really Edward Stone you are."

"Oh, I'm Edward Stone, all right, don't you worry about that. Your mother will know the moment she sees me. How far do you live from here?"

"About half a mile."

"As I'm hungry, and my mouth is watering for that fatted calf, we'll trot right along. Just wait a moment till I say good-bye to my friends yonder."

Edward Stone walked over to the two men, now more than ever indistinct in the darkness, and said something to them in a low tone.

"All right, old pal," replied one of them, "we'll meet you at the old mill to-morrow afternoon. See that you don't disapp'int us, for we hain't got no time to waste around this here blazin' neighborhood."

The speaker's companion lighted his pipe and the two men remained sitting on the log after Edward Stone left them and rejoined Jack, who had waited for him much against his will.

"How is your mother, pretty well fixed, isn't she?" said the ex-convict as they walked upon the railroad bridge.

"No, she's not pretty well fixed," replied Jack shortly. "We just manage to live and that's all."

"Oh, come, now, young man, that won't go down with me. I'm too old a bird to be fooled by chaff. My brother left her a twenty-acre homestead, free and clear, and a thousand-dollar life insurance, which, of course, she's collected long ago."

"You seem to know all about it."

"I know that much, at any rate. I expect your mother to produce a small contribution to help me on to New York. It's only fair that she should do it."

"I don't see why."

"She don't need it half as much as I do."

"That has nothing to do with it. You're able to go to work and earn money, while she isn't."

"What do you do for a living yourself? Hang around the place and sleep?" asked Edward Stone sneeringly.

Jack made no answer to the insulting remark.

"What's the matter with that tongue of yours? You can use it well enough when you want to," continued his uncle.

"There is nothing the matter with it," answered Jack.

"Why don't you answer my question, then? How do you employ your time?"

"I work."

"On your mother's place?"

"In the village."

"Clerking in a store?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, who are you working for?" persisted Edward Stone.

"A gentleman by the name of Whale."

"What's his business?"

"Real estate, insurance, and so forth."

"Humph! What does he pay you?"

"You won't learn from me."

"I guess I'll have to teach you a thing or two before I leave, you young whippersnapper," said Edward Stone angrily. "You might as well learn first as last that I won't stand any nonsense from you."

"If you think that you can sit on my neck because you're my uncle you'll find yourself mistaken," retorted Jack, growing hot under the collar.

"Look here, Jack Stone, it won't pay you to ride a high horse with me," he said in a hissing tone. "I've just come from a school where I've learned a thing or two. When a man has had to toe the mark like a slave for six years and eight months he doesn't feel in the humor for taking no nonsense from people on the outside. You'll do well to take the hint. I'm willing to overlook what you've said to me up to this point, seeing that you're my nephew, and I haven't anything against you, but cut it out after this, do you understand? It might pay you to be friends with me. You don't know but I could make your fortune. Is that your house yonder, where the light is shining through the trees?"

"Yes," replied Jack a bit sulkily.

"Well, run ahead and tell your mother I'm coming. The surprise of my sudden appearance might be too much for her," he added with a chuckle.

Jack hastened forward to warn his mother of Edward Stone's coming, while the unwished-for visitor followed more leisurely, chuckling as he went, as though he was mightily pleased about something.

CHAPTER V.—Concerning the Arrival of Edward Stone at the Cottage.

"Mother, where are you?" cried Jack, rushing into the kitchen.

"Your mother is upstairs in her room," said Dicky Locke, who was the sole occupant of the kitchen. "Where have you been that you're so late, you naughty boy? I've got your supper in the oven. You'd better sit right down and eat it here at the table."

"I'll be back in a few minutes, Dicky. Must see mother first," replied Jack, running out through the dining-room into the hallway and so on upstairs to his mother's room.

"Dear me, Jack, how you startled me!" cried his mother, as the boy bounced in on her. "What has kept you so late?"

"I was out to the Payson Farm with Mr. Whalen, taking down facts and figures for Friday's sale. It took us all the afternoon to go over the place."

"Well, you'd better get your supper. Dicky is keeping it warm for you."

"I know it," mother; but I want to tell you something first."

"What is it?" asked his mother, noting his excited look.

"Edward Stone has come."

The little woman looked startled and put her hand to her heart.

"Is he downstairs?" she asked in a low voice.

"No. I left him out in the road, but he ought to be on the veranda by this time."

"Where did you meet him?"

"On the other side of the railroad bridge."

"And you recognized him?"

"Well, hardly. I thought it was him as soon as he walked up to me and asked me where you lived."

"I suppose I'll have to go downstairs and see him," she said.

"I'm afraid you will, mother."

Jack went to the front door and found his uncle standing on the piazza waiting to be admitted. He ushered him into the little sitting-room, where he lighted the lamp and left him. Then, after returning to his mother's room and telling her that Mr. Stone was in the house, he went back to the kitchen to eat his supper.

"So you've come at last," said Dicky. "I was wondering whether you wanted any supper at all."

"Did you imagine I had dined out?" grinned Jack.

"I didn't think anything about the matter."

"You must always take an interest in me, Dicky."

"Is that so?" she answered saucily. "Why should I?"

"Because you think a whole lot of me."

"Don't be so sure of that."

"I am sure of it. If I wasn't I'd have a fit for you know I think a whole lot of you," he said as he began eating.

"I'm thinking you're trying to jolly me, Jack," she replied with an arch look.

"Not a bit of it. I mean to marry you some day."

"Don't talk nonsense, Jack."

"I'm not talking nonsense."

"Yes, you are."

"You'll give me a chance, at any rate?"

"A chance for what?"

"A chance to marry you."

"I'll have to consider the matter."

"Remember, I'm going to be rich some day."

"Are you?"

"Yes. You know I own that piece of land out in Montana. I've a great mind to go out there and see what it looks like."

"The idea of you going out in the wilds of Montana."

"What do you know about Montana, anyway?"

"Not much."

"That's what I thought. That property is on the Snake River, and there's a town or village not far from it."

"Well, since you know where your land is, it would be foolish to go out there just to look at it. It is not likely to run away."

"There's not much chance of my going out there at present, anyway."

"I should think not. You've got to stay home and look after your mother."

"That's right. And you, too."

"Well, I like that! I can look after myself, thank you."

"You only think you can. I've got to keep my eyes on you for my own interest."

"Well, you needn't. I don't want to be watched."

"Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you. We've got a visitor."

"A visitor!" cried Dicky.

Jack nodded.

"He's in the parlor talking to mother."

"Who is he?"

"A relative on my father's side."

"When did he come? I didn't let anybody in."

"I let him in myself just before I came out here to supper."

"Nobody rang the bell. I should have heard it and gone to the door."

"It wasn't necessary for him to ring. He came to the house with me."

"Your mother didn't tell me that she expected a visitor."

"She didn't know when he was going to show up."

"Did you meet him at the station?"

"No, I met him on the road here."

"Am I to get supper for him? It's pretty late for that."

"You may have to get him a bite, but I wouldn't worry about him. Any old thing is good enough for him. As he invited himself he must take pot luck. If I had anything to say on the subject he'd take something else."

"What else?"

"His leave. His room is better than his company, if you want to know the truth, Dicky."

At that moment Mrs. Stone came into the kitchen.

"You'll have to get some supper for a gentleman who has just come and is going to stay here a day or two," she said.

"What shall I cook?" asked the girl, not relishing the idea of preparing a meal at that hour of the evening.

"I wouldn't cook anything," said Jack. "You've got some cold lamb left over from dinner, haven't you? Well, slice some of it off and give it to him with bread, butter and milk. What more can he ask for? This isn't a hotel."

"That will do," nodded Mrs. Stone. "You can lay it out on the end of the dining-room table."

Dicky followed instructions, and in a few minutes went to the sitting-room door and told her mistress that the table was ready. Edward Stone walked out to the dining-room and soon got away with everything in the edible line in sight. He then remarked that he was tired and should like to go to bed. Jack showed him to the spare chamber and left him to turn in.

"What do you think of him, mother?" Jack asked on returning downstairs.

"I think he's very much worse for his long imprisonment," she answered. "He is nothing like the man he was when he was convicted and sent to the penitentiary. Association with criminals has hardened and, I fear, ruined him."

"Did he strike you for moey?"

"He asked me to lend him \$300."

"Lend him \$300, eh?" That's pretty good. Give him \$300, you mean."

"He said lend."

"Oh, he'd say anything to get hold of the money. What answer did you give him?"

"I told him I had but a little money and could not afford to comply with his request."

"And what did he say to that?"

"He smiled in an odd way and said he guessed I'd be able to find the money some way."

"He's got a pretty cold nerve, but I am confident none of that \$1,000 you've got in bank will find its way into his pocket, not if I know it."

Shortly afterward mother and son retired to their rooms, and soon every light in the house was extinguished.

CHAPTER VI.—In Which Jack Visits the Old Mill.

Jack, as was his custom, was out of bed next morning by six o'clock. Dicky was already up and at work about the kitchen, while the hired man had milked the two cows and attended to various other duties by that time. When Mrs. Stone appeared at seven, breakfast was on the table. Jack went up to the door of the spare chamber and knocked.

"What do you want?" growled a sleepy voice.

"Breakfast is ready," answered the boy.

"I'll be down when I get ready," said Edward Stone, as if he was master of the house.

Jack said no more, but returned to the dining-room and told his mother that their visitor would take his own time about coming to breakfast. Then he ate his own breakfast and soon after started for Mr. Whalen's office in the village, carrying his lunch with him. Early in the afternoon Mr. Whalen handed him a fire insurance policy to deliver to a farmer a few miles out of the village. He mounted his employer's bicycle and started on his errand. His road took him by an old deserted mill, and as he passed within a short distance of the building he saw two men, tough-looking fellows they were, too, sitting on the doorstep in the sun smoking. They were strangers in that locality, and it immediately struck the boy that these must be the two men who had been with Edward Stone the evening before when he met him near the railroad bridge. He at once recalled the remark he had overheard one of the men make, that they would expect Edward Stone to meet them that afternoon at the old mill, and that he mustn't disappoint them.

Jack kept straight on to the farm where he was bound. After delivering the insurance policy he turned around and started back for the village. When he came in sight of the mill again there was no one at the door. He was somewhat curious to learn if Edward Stone had met the two men and if the trio were in the mill at that moment. He decided to investigate the matter. Dismounting a short distance from the building, and leaning his wheel against the hedge by the roadside, he approached the mill from the rear. He knew that there was a back entrance to the place through a broken part of the rear wall. The hole was concealed in a mass of overgrown shrubbery, but Jack knew just where it was. He crept up to a certain point in the shrubbery, pushed the green stuff aside, and found a jagged-looking hole facing him. He had no trouble making his way through the opening, and in a few minutes was standing in the cellar of the mill, which was quite dark and littered with dirt and rubbish.

Not far away was a short flight of wooden steps leading to the ground floor. Jack crept up these stairs, which ended in a narrow, box-like entry at the back of the mill. Turning to the left, he faced an open doorway communicating with a room lumbered with pieces of rusty machinery and other articles of no particular value. The sound of voices caused the boy to pause and listen. There were three men seated close together in the darkened room conversing in ordinary tones, and one of the voices he easily recognized as belonging to Edward Stone.

"So you think the prospect of gettin' the money

you counted on from your sister-in-law looks kind of slim?" said one of the men.

"I'm afraid it does," admitted Edward Stone. "She isn't as easy a mark as I figured. She's got a thousand dollars in bank, but she gave me to understand that nothing would induce her to draw a cent of it unless she needed it for some special emergency. I tried to get her to loan me \$300, promising to return her \$500 for it in a short time, but she wouldn't listen to me."

"I had my doubts all along about you gettin' it," said the other; "but you were so positive that you could persuade or bulldoze her into coughin' up that I let you have your way. It has simply been a waste of time comin' here."

"Hasn't she got any money in the house that you could lift?" asked the speaker's companion, looking at Stone.

"She probably has a few dollars, but it wouldn't be worth spoiling my reputation with her to take that," replied Jack's uncle.

"Your reputation!" chuckled the first speaker. "You lost that when you were sent to State prison. I reckon your sister-in-law ain't half as proud of you as you may think she is. I'll bet she won't draw an easy breath while you're in her house. It's a wonder to me that she stands for your company at all."

"She wouldn't dare refuse me her hospitality," answered Stone.

"Why not?"

"Because she is afraid that it might get around that her husband's brother is an ex-convict."

"If you have any idea that's the case why don't you use it to intimidate her into givin' you the \$300?"

"I gave her a strong hint to that effect, but on the money question she's firm. She's willing to put up with me as a visitor because I'm her late husband's only brother, but she draws a line at loaning me any of her money."

"Then your object in comin' here is a failure. We'll have to continue our tramp East unless——"

"Unless what?" asked Stone.

"We can raise the dust some other way."

"How else can we raise it?"

"Sanders and me has been talkin' over a plan, for we had our doubts about you succeedin'."

"What's your plan, Gridley?"

"After you left us last night we took a walk around the neighborhood and picked up a thing or two worth knowin' to gents of our profession."

"What did you pick up?" asked Stone curiously.

"We met a farmer who said his name was Dunne. He'd been boozin' at the tavern till he was several sheets in the wind, and he took us for a couple of summer boarders livin' at the farm next to his."

"Well?"

"Sanders and me is naurally inquisitive, and we pumped him good and hard."

"You bet we did," chuckled Sanders, lighting his pipe.

"Among other things we found out that a couple of old wealthy maiden sisters live, with only one woman servant, as old as themselves, in a big stone house, surrounded by considerable grounds, on the outskirts of the village not far from here. The farmer p'inted the place out to us. Didn't he, Sanders?"

"That's what he did," grinned Sanders.

"The farmer told us that they own a whole lot of old-fashioned silverware and other valuable jimcracks which they keep in a strong-box in their room. He also said that they have thousands of dollars' worth of bonds which they keep in the box along with the other stuff. They also keep a good bit of money on hand, too, for they ain't got no confidence in banks since the panic five or ten year ago when a bank in which they had considerable funds on deposit failed and they lost most of it. It seems that there hain't been no robberies in this neighborhood for years, and the old women think their strong-box as good as a safe deposit vault. Now, it's Sander's idea and mine, too, that here is a good chance for three enterprisin' individuals like ourselves to pay them old women a visit in the small hours of tomorrow mornin' and put some of their hoarded wealth into circulation, seein' as it isn't doin' nobody any good, not even themselves, where it is. How does the idea strike you, Stone?"

"You mean that you propose to commit a burglary?" replied Jack's uncle in a tone that showed that, bad as he was, the suggestion was somewhat of a shock to him.

"That's what the noospapers call it," said Gridley coolly.

"And you expect me to take a hand in it?"

"Why not? You're our pal. It wouldn't be a square deal to bar you out. You intended to do the fair thing with that \$300 you expected to get from your sister-in-law, but which can't be counted on now."

"I don't fancy the idea much," replied Stone in a hesitating way.

"Oh, you don't? Why not?"

"It's not in my line."

"What is your line?" sneered Gridley. "Wasn't you sent up for swiping money that didn't belong to you?"

"I admit it, but I intended to return it if I was lucky with the ponies."

"You did, eh? What a moral chap you make yourself out to be! You intended to return it if the dope sheets panned out the way you figgered on. I have met men like you before. You put on a bold front, go to church and all that, while you have your hands all the time in somebody's pocket on the sly."

"You needn't dig me about my misfortune," growled Stone.

"I s'pose if you hadn't got caught with the goods you'd still be a model citizen. What's the difference between robbin' your employer by doctorin' the books and relievin' them two old women down the road of a portion of their superfluous wealth? It's takin' what don't belong to you in both cases, ain't it? Well, the world owes us all a livin'. I'd be willin' to work for my share if it wasn't for them blamed trusts and corporations which is grindin' a poor man down to next to nothin' while the people that owns 'em are livin' on the fat of the land, and ain't done nothin' but sit at their desks an hour or two a day stackin' up their chips which the rank and file is earnin' for 'em with the sweat of their brows. Somebody left them old women provided for. How did he get so much money in the first place? He robbed the common people or he wouldn't have it to leave to them women. Well, it's up to us to get some of it back. We need it worse than they do. We're

plum down to hard-pan. At any rate, me and Sanders is goin' to have a try at it. Are you with us or ain't you? If you ain't say so and we'll part company right here, and you can hoe your own row as best you can with your sister-in-law, which I reckon will be worse than drawin' teeth. If you ain't a fool you'll come in and take your share of the blunt, for me and Sanders have sized up the crib and it looks as easy to crack as rollin' off a log. In fact, it's so easy that it seems almost a shame to do it. It's just the same as findin' money."

"I can't go back on you, my friends, so I'll have to go into the scheme," said Stone, after a momentary hesitation.

"Now you're talkin'," replied Gridley. "Listen and I'll tell you how we're goin' to——" At that moment the three men were startled by a crash and a fall in the entry.

CHAPTER VII.—In Which Jack Finds Himself in a Tight Fix.

Gridley sprang to his feet with an imprecation and rushed into the entry, followed by Sanders and Edward Stone. They were just in time to see Jack rising from the dust and debris of a barrel against which he had leaned too heavily while listening to the conversation of the rascals in the room beyond.

"What are you doin' here, you young jack-napes?" asked Gridley, gripping the boy by the arm and dragging him into the room, where there was light enough for the astonished Edward Stone to recognize his nephew.

"Jack Stone!" he gasped.

"Hello!" exclaimed Gridley. "Do you know this kid?"

"I do. He's my nephew."

"Your nephew!" cried the crook.

"Yes, the boy I stopped last night at the bridge and afterward went away with."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" growled Gridley, taking care, however, not to let go his hold on Jack's arm. "Look here, young fellow, how came you to be in that entry?"

"What difference does it make to you how I came to be there?" said Jack boldly.

"I reckon it makes considerable difference."

"I don't see how. I have as much right in the mill as you, or your friend, or Mr. Stone. In fact, I have more right, as I live in this part of the country and you people do not."

"I'm not goin' to argue the matter with you, young feller. Just answer me a question or two. How long have you been hangin' around that place?"

"That's my business," replied Jack.

"Well, it's our business, too. How long was you standin' in that entry listenin' to our talk?"

"You won't find out from me," replied Jack defiantly.

"I reckon you was long enough there to hear a whole lot not intended for your ears. You must have been in the buildin' some time, snoopin' around, though how you got in is a mystery to me, for we've been here a long time, and we'd have seen you if you came in by the door. There must be another way of gittin' in that we don't

know about. P'raps you'll let us know how you managed the trick."

"You'll have to find that out, too."

"I think we saw a chap of your size goin' by here on a wheel more'n an hour ago. We saw you look at us. Looks now as if you wanted to know why we were hangin' around this place, so you came back on the sly and got in through some loophole in the back. As it strikes me you have learned more than is good for us I'm thinkin' you'll have to remain here whether you want to or not."

Jack made no answer, but eyed Gridley without any sign of fear.

"Go outside and see if there's anybody around the neighborhood," said Gridley to Sanders.

His companion obeyed, disappearing through the doorway into the front room and thence through the main entrance to the open space outside the old sawmill.

"What do you want to detain the boy for?" chipped in Stone at this juncture. "Let him go. He isn't doing you any harm."

Edward Stone, for reasons of his own, wished to stand as well as possible in his nephew's good opinion, and it did not occur to him that Jack had overheard any of the conversation which had taken place between himself and the two crooks.

"Let him go, eh?" almost hissed Gridley. "So that he can blab all he's heard and queer our game. Oh, yes, I'll let him go. I see myself doin' it."

At that moment the sound of wheels in the road reached Jack's ears. He thought the moment a fitting one to make a break to escape from his captor. Not every boy would have attempted it, but then Jack was in a class by himself. Whirling half around he tore his arm out of Gridley's grasp and before the rascal could prevent him he sprang through the doorway and vanished. With an imprecation of mingled surprise and rage Gridley jumped after him. He alone would never have overtaken the lively youth. Unfortunately for Jack, just when escape seemed certain, Sanders stepped in at the front door and unconsciously blocked his way. The boy collided with him, and both went down in a heap just outside the entrance. Before Jack could extricate himself from the tangle and continue his flight Gridley sprang out and grabbed him.

"Blame you, you young monkey!" gritted the crook, closing one of his hands about Jack's throat, and then lifting him bodily from the ground and bearing him back into the mill. "So you thought you'd give me the slip, eh? I reckon I won't give you another chance to work any monkey shines on us."

He hauled the boy into the back room again.

"Look spry, Sanders, there are some pieces of cord in the corner yonder. Fetch 'em here. Now, then, turn him over and let's fix him so he'll stay where we put him."

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Sanders, feeling his stomach. "He knocked the wind out of me. I'd as soon be kicked by a mule as to get another crack like that."

"You ought to thank your stars that you were in the door to block his escape," growled Gridley. "If he'd got clean off we'd have had to make tracks from here mighty sudden. I reckon he heard enough of our talk to make things pretty

hot for us, and to put a spoke in our plans for tonight."

"If you feel sure of that I ain't sorry I stopped his escape," replied Sanders.

"I'm sure enough of it not to care to take any more chances with him that I can help, you can bet your life. I haven't been out of Cresson so long that I'm achin' to get back ag'in. Tie his ankles together, now, and make a good job of it."

During the proceedings which transformed Jack from a free agent to a helpless prisoner, Edward Stone remained in the background, gazing gloomily on the actions of his associates.

"Now," said Gridley in a tone of satisfaction, as he viewed the hapless youth, "I reckon you won't give us any more trouble. It's the butter-in who always gets hurt. Next time that you're curious to learn about things that don't concern you maybe you'll think of this scrape and hold off."

Here Edward Stone beckoned Gridley aside.

"What are you going to do with him?" he asked. "Remember, he's my nephew."

"I don't care who he is. He knows too much for our good. I'm goin' to put him down in the cellar and keep him there till we have put that job through. Then we can leave him where somebody'll find him in the mornin'."

Stone had nothing further to say in the matter, and so Gridley called on Sanders to help carry Jack down into the cellar and, as a further precaution, bind him to one of the posts down there. Then the rascals left him in the gloom and the company of his own thoughts, which were not particularly happy.

"This is a fierce hole I've got myself into," he grumbled to himself. "If that blamed old barrel hadn't given way and landed me unexpectedly on the floor of the entry I should have learned more of the purposes of those rascals and been able to have landed them in the lock-up."

Jack experimented with his bonds, but the result of his efforts was not very encouraging, and so he desisted. He could hear the men occasionally moving about overhead. Sometimes a long silence ensued, from which he judged they had probably moved outside of the building. Time passed very slowly to Jack. He knew that Mr. Whalen would wonder what had become of him, for he was expected to go on another errand after he got back from Farmer Wheatley's. He judged that it was about four o'clock when he was placed in the cellar. After he had been there two hours he imagined it must be after dark, though as a matter of fact the sun had not yet gone down.

In the meantime Gridley and Sanders having eaten up all their provisions sent Edward Stone to the village for a fresh supply of edibles. He met Sanders down near the railroad bridge and delivered the packages to him, after which he went to the Stone cottage. He had arranged to join his two associates at a certain point along the road to the mill at midnight, when they would proceed leisurely to the home of the two maiden ladies whom they designed to rob. Gridley and his companion had sundry tools concealed about their persons with which they expected to force an entrance to the house, and afterward break into the strong-box, which they had learned was made of oak, clamped with iron.

They intended to bury the heavier part of their

plunder in the cellar of the mill until some future day when they meant to return, dig it up and carry it away. The money and bonds they proposed to take away with them to New York or Chicago, and enjoy life on the proceeds thereof. Edward Stone reached the cottage at about half-past five and seated himself unconcernedly on the veranda to wait until he should be called to supper. Mrs. Stone noted his arrival, but did not feel enough interest in his society to go out and ask him how he had been passing his time all the afternoon. Jack generally got home between five and six, but when the clock indicated the latter hour he had not showed up. Supper was pretty nearly ready by that time, but Mrs. Stone delayed it in expectation that her son might come in at any moment.

When half-past six came and he was still away she reluctantly told Dicky to dish up and then tell Mr. Stone to come in. Edward Stone made himself as entertaining as possible during the meal, and intimated, much to his sister-in-law's relief, that he might take a train East in the morning. Mrs. Stone was nervously afraid that he would insist on having another private chat with her with reference to the \$300 he wanted to borrow, but to her great satisfaction he showed no inclination for such an interview. Seven o'clock came, and then eight, and finally nine, and still Jack failed to come home. His mother was so anxious about him that she sent Meiggs, the hired man, to the home of Mr. Whalen to find out what was detaining her son. The man returned with word that Mr. Whalen didn't know where Jack was, and was greatly puzzled to account for his absence. He told Meiggs that he had sent Jack out to Farmer Wheatley's with a fire insurance policy that afternoon at two o'clock, and that was the last he had seen of him.

Mrs. Stone, greatly alarmed, told Meiggs to saddle the horse and ride out to Farmer Wheatley's and make inquiries about Jack. An hour before this Edward Stone had gone to his room presumably to turn in for the night. He simply turned out the light and sat down by the window to smoke and wait till he heard the clock strike eleven. One thing that bothered him was that he knew Mrs. Stone was up waiting for news of her son. However, his bedroom overlooked a shed, and by taking off his shoes he could easily reach the ground without making any noise. So when the clock struck eleven he softly opened his window to its widest extent, let himself down on the shed, then jumped to the yard. Resuming his shoes he made off in the darkness, and was soon crossing the footpath of the railroad en route to the spot where he expected to meet his associates.

CHAPTER VIII.—From the Frying-pan to the Fire.

The time that Jack Stone remained in the cellar under the old sawmill seemed endless to him. The sun set in due time and darkness fell upon the face of nature. Sanders came back with the packages of food purchased by Edward Brown, and the two crooks enjoyed themselves on the floor above without much thought for their prisoner in the depths below. Among the articles that Edward Stone had been commissioned to

get were two pocket flasks of whisky, and under the exhilarating influence of that liquor Gridley and Sanders got quite jolly. Finally Sanders thought of Jack and suggested that he ought to be given something to eat. Gridley had no objection, so the rascals took a lighted candle and some sandwiches into the cellar. They found the boy just as they had left him tied to the post. Sanders released one of his arms and handed him the sandwiches.

"Eat hearty, my buck, for you won't get nothin' more till tomorrow mornin'," said Gridley.

As Jack was very hungry by that time he got away with the sandwiches in short order, after which Sanders tied his arm again, and the rascals left him in the dark and silence of the cellar once more. Jack heard the men walking about on the ground floor of the mill for a long time after that, and he varied the monotony of his confinement by persistent efforts to free himself. In retying the boy Sanders did the job rather carelessly, and the consequences was Jack began to make some progress with his bonds. It was slow, however, and he had to take frequent rests. Midnight came before he got one hand out of limbo, but after that the rest was easy, and he was soon free. He hadn't heard a sound from the two crooks for some time, so he concluded that they had left the mill for the home of the Misses Reynolds. Walking cautiously upstairs he found nothing but silence and darkness.

"They've gone, sure enough," he muttered. "Now I must notify the head constable and get them pinched."

He hustled out into the road and looked for his wheel. He found it just where he left it against the hedge. Mounting it he started for the village at a quick clip. A mile and a half down the road, on the outskirts of Battersby, stood the isolated homestead of the Misses Reynolds. Jack had to pass it on his way to the constable's house. As he approached the building the boy kept a wary eye out for indications of the presence of the three rascals. He could not tell whether the crooks had yet begun their felonious work. He was banking on the fact that he believed it would take them some time to break into the strong-box which contained the treasures of the spinster ladies.

He hoped that he would have time enough to bring the head constable and several other men to the house in time to catch the burglars before they got away with their anticipated booty. Jack looked narrowly at the building and grounds as he spun past. The front of the old house looked dark and silent, and there was not a sign to show that anything out of the way was on the tapis. As the boy swung around the corner of the street on which the Reynolds' property abutted he looked back. He was able to catch a good view of the rear of the building. Then it was that he got evidence that the rascals were on the ground. He saw a ladder planted against the sill of one of the second-story windows which was open. A man, greatly reembling his uncle, Edward Stone, appeared at the window and looked out.

"I'm afraid I won't have time to go to the constable's," breathed Jack, pulling up and dismounting close to the hedge.

He was further satisfied that his time was limited when he saw the figure who resembled Stone

get out of the window with a bag full of swag and make his way to the ground. Laying the bag down on the lawn he hurried back up the ladder and entered the building once more. Jack hardly knew what move to make under the circumstances. Still he must do something to upset the plans of the rascals and if possible save the property of the two old maids. He retraced his course along the road till he came opposite to the house, then he entered the grounds and walked to the rear. Jack reached the corner of the building just as one of the burglars, with a bag of plunder over his shoulder, started to descend the ladder.

The boy, shouting for help, sprang under the ladder and pushed it backward. He had just heard the sound of wagon wheels coming along the road. The burglar, who was Sanders, uttered a cry of terror as he felt himself falling. His exclamation brought Gridley to the window. He reached for the highest rung in an effort to catch the ladder and save his pal, but the attempt was futile, and Sanders struck the ground in a heap, lying there half stunned. Jack's shouts and the sound of an approaching wagon along the road alarmed Gridley. Calling to Edward Stone, who stood behind him with the third and last bag their swag ready to be carried off, to throw the plunder out of the window and follow himself, Gridley crawled over the wide sill and dropped to the soft lawn beneath. After throwing down the ladder, Jack had rushed to the fence bordering on the road, and shouted lustily at the driver of the wagon, who happened to be a farm boy returning home from some festive gathering.

"What's the trouble?" asked the boy, reining in his horse.

"Burglars," replied Jack.

"Burglars!" gasped the farm boy.

"Yes. Come here and help me save the property of the Misses Reynolds."

"I dunno as I want to get into trouble," objected the boy.

"Don't be a coward. I've knocked one of the chaps out myself. Come along and we can prevent them getting away with the booty if we can't do anything else."

The boy was exasperatingly slow about complying with Jack's suggestion. The fact of the matter was he didn't care to butt in. Jack stamped his foot with impatience.

"The rascals will get away with the stuff if you don't hurry," he said.

"I dunno as it's my funeral," grumbled the young countryman.

"Then I'll have to tackle them alone if you won't help me," replied Jack in a tone of disgust. "I'll tell the constable when I see him how you went back on me, and I guess he'll find out who you are and get you a roasting in the paper."

The country boy hesitated and then with evident reluctance started to get out of the wagon. In the meantime the crooks recovered from their temporary scare and hastily dragged the three bags of plunder into the shadow of the ledge. They lay low a few minutes, waiting to see what was going to happen. All they could make out was the boy who had given the alarm was talking to the driver of the wagon. Looking into the road Gridley saw that the wagon contained only a boy who seemed to be afraid to do anything.

"Here's our chance," he said to his companion. "We'll capture the wagon, put the swag in it and drive to Duncansville, where we'll catch the first local East in few hours from now."

"That will be just the thing," replied Sanders, rubbing his wrenched neck. "It will be a big stroke of luck for us. We won't need to go back to the mill and hide the plate, for we can take it along with us."

"You and Stone make a rush for the wagon and catch the driver. I'll sneak up to the chap who butted in on us and put him out of business so he won't interfere with us any more."

Accordingly Sanders and Edward Stone leaped the fence and caught the farm boy just as he stepped to the ground. A blow from Sanders' fist stretched him senseless in the road. At the same time Gridley crept up behind Jack and laid him out with a blow. Something about the lad looked familiar to him. Kneeling down and getting a close view of the boy's face he uttered an imprecation as he recognized Jack. He dragged the boy through the gate and into the road.

"Who do you s'pose this rooster is?" he said to his companions. "It's the kid we left bound in the cellar of the mill."

"My nephew!" exclaimed Edward Stone in surprise.

"Yes, your nephew," replied Gridley in an ugly tone. "He escaped some way and started to butt in on us again, thinkin' to queer us; but I'll fix him. Sanders, see if there's anythin' in the wagon to tie this cub with."

"What are you going to do with him?" asked Edward Stone. "Tie him and leave him here?"

"I know what I'll do with him," gritted Gridley.

"You mustn't hurt the boy," objected Stone. "Remember, he's my——"

"Shut up!" snorted his companion. "I'm runnin' this job."

"But I won't have him hurt," answered Stone doggedly.

Gridley growled out an imprecation and just then Sanders came up with some pieces of rope and proceeded to tie Jack hand and foot.

"Now gag him with his handkerchief and toss him into the wagon," said Gridley.

After that was done the three bags of plunder were transferred to the wagon and then the men got in, Gridley taking up the reins.

"Going to leave the other boy in the road?" asked Sanders.

"Yes. He can lie there till he comes to his senses."

Thus speaking Gridley started the horse. Nothing further was said till they came to the railroad tracks at a point a few hundred feet west of the village station. Drawn up on a side track were two freight cars. One was locked, sealed and labeled with its destination—Moorhead, a large town about 100 miles west on the Red River, which divided the State from North Dakota. Gridley backed the wagon up against the other car, which was empty.

"Now, then, Sanders, you and Stone shove the kid into the empty car. That will keep him from interferin' with us any more tonight. Shut the door on him, and by the time he's discovered by the station agent we'll be on our way East."

Stone breathed easier when he found that Jack was only to be held a prisoner in the car for a few

hours, so he helped Sanders carry the boy into the car.

"See that the cords and gag are secure," cautioned Gridley.

Sanders examined the prisoner, who had recovered his senses, and announced that everything was ship-shape. The car door was shoved tightly to, and then the unfortunate Jack heard the wagon wheels go grinding away in the distance, growing fainter and fainter until they were no longer to be heard.

CHAPTER IX.—Which Introduces Sam Wells.

Then he became conscious of a different sound close by. It came from the opposite end of the car. Jack listened intently, and was soon convinced that the car had another occupant. Probably it was a tramp who had crawled in there to sleep off his fatigue, for he was snoring away at a great rate. Jack had seen many a typical tramp, and he didn't care a whole lot for their society; but under the circumstances he thought the tramp might prove useful to him, so he decided to cultivate his acquaintance if he could. While he was considering the matter he heard the whistle of a locomotive in the distance. Jack knew that there was no passenger train at that hour, around two in the morning, so he concluded it was the night freight. His supposition was quite correct—it was the night freight, the conductor of which had instructions to pick up the loaded car and the empty on the Battersby siding and take them on to Moorhead.

Presently the long, heavy freight rumbled by on the main track at decreasing speed up to the head of the siding where the caboose was uncoupled, the switch was thrown open, and the train backed down and slammed into the loaded car ahead with a jolt that knocked both Jack and the other occupant of the car over on their faces. The shock naturally awoke the sleeper and he sat up with a smothered exclamation that sounded rather boyish. When Jack recovered from the shaking up he had received the car he was in was moving slowly down the track. In a few minutes it came to a stop and then backed down the main track to the caboose, which it hit with a light jolt and a rattle of the coupling. Thirty seconds later the car was again in motion, a part of the train itself, and its speed increased until the train was traveling along at ten or twelve miles an hour.

"Gee whiz!" Jack heard a voice say, and he knew it was a boy and not a man who spoke. "This is where I get another free ride and in the right direction. I hope it lasts all night. That would give me quite a lift on my way. It's lucky none of the train hands shoved a lantern into this coop and nosed me out. They would have given me the grand bounce for fair—might have kicked the stuffing out of me for trying to work the company for a free pass over the line. Well, I guess I'll turn over and finish my sleep. Hello! What's that?"

The speaker, who had been sitting up with his back against the forward end of the car, listened intently to a sound he heard at the other end of the enclosure. The sound was caused by Jack

striking the floor with his heels to attract his attention.

"Gee! There's somebody else in this car," muttered the youth. "Must be some tramp who is boning a ride like myself. I wonder what he's making that noise for? Perhaps he's got a fit. I guess I'll go over and see."

The speaker got up, fumbled in one of his pockets for a match, struck it on his boot and then walked toward the sound, holding the gleaming match above his head. He caught an indistinct view of Jack as the light went out. Then he lit another and covered the remaining distance. The light enabled him to make out the bound and gagged form of Jack looking at him in a mutely appealing way.

He sprung a third match on the scene and looked down at Jack.

"Gosh! If it ain't a boy, bound and gagged as tight as blazes. I s'pose you want to get loose, eh? I reckon I would if I was in your place."

Jack nodded and made a mumbling sound, which was the best he could do under the circumstances. The match expired and the strange boy tossed it away. Then he yanked a big jack-knife from his pocket and knelt beside Jack. First he relieved him of the gag.

"Now you can talk, I guess. While I'm cutting you loose tell me who you are, and how you got into this fix. Who's been doing you up, and why?"

"My name is Jack Stone. I live near Battersby, a few miles back. Three ex-convicts, who robbed a house on the outskirts of the village, captured me when I tried to put a spoke in their wheel. After binding and gagging me they carried me in a wagon they captured to the siding near the station and tumbled me into this car, shutting the door on me. They wanted to get me out of the way long enough so they could make their escape to the next town, probably Duncansville, and catch an early local East in the morning. That's the meaning of my being here. Thanks. I feel better now that I'm free once more. I'm awfully obliged to you. What's your name, and how came you to be in this car yourself? You appear to have come here voluntarily, and I should judge that your object was to catch on to a free ride down the road."

"My name is Sam Wells. I'm tramping it from Boston to my brother who lives in Montana. I haven't a red cent, so I've had to get on as best I could, which isn't a very rapid way of traveling. I've been nearly three months getting as far as this. I hope this car goes straight on to Moorhead. If it does I'll be all hunk."

"I'm glad to know you, Sam," said Jack. "Sorry I can't enjoy your company long, but I've got to leave this car at Duncansville, whether it stops there or not."

"How far is Duncansville from the place you live?"

"About ten miles by rail, but it's only eight by the county road. Those rascals who stuck me in this car are probably driving there in the wagon with their plunder stolen from the home of two old unmarried ladies who are said to be pretty well off. I intend to put the Duncansville police on their track. The only difficulty is that they might not stop there but keep on to Bardstown, twelve miles further on. However, in that case

they could probably be headed off by telephone. So you're bound out West, are you?"

"Yes, to Montana."

"What part of Montana?"

"Tanglefoot, on the Snake River."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Jack in surprise. "Why, I own a good-sized piece of land on the Snake River within three miles of Tanglefoot."

"You do?"

"I do."

"Ever been there?" asked Sam eagerly.

"No. I'd like to go there first-rate and see what my property looks like."

"I'm sorry that you can't come with me. My brother is a prospector. He's out there looking for silver."

"Looking for silver!"

"Sure. There is lots of silver in the ground along the Snake River. There are several mines in operation on the river not very far from Tanglefoot. There might be silver on your property."

"Oh, I guess not. The gentleman who gave me the property wouldn't have presented me with silver mine. He told me he thought it might make a good farm. The lawyer who drew up the deed transferring the ground to my mother in trust for me, for I can't own real estate in my own name till I'm twenty-one, said that the place was worth about \$2,000 altogether, and would increase in value in time."

"How much did your mother pay for it?"

"Nothing."

"Nothin! That's pretty cheap. And the lawyer said it was worth \$2,000. How came the man to give you a \$2,000 piece of property for nothing?"

"He gave it to me because I saved his life."

"That so? How did you save his life?"

Jack told his new acquaintance the particulars of what happened at the railroad bridge when he rescued Roger Prior from the express.

"Gee! You're in a class by yourself," said Sam Wells admiringly. "I'd give a whole lot if you were going to Tanglefoot with me."

"Well, if I had the time and the money I'd like to go with you, as I said before. Just at present I haven't either. I guess the whole of my coin wouldn't foot up more than seventy-five cents."

"It's kind of lonesome tramping it alone and working here and there for enough to pay for a square meal and a night's lodging."

"I guess it must be. Well, I've got to take a look out to see if we're coming near Duncansville."

"There goes the whistle, and the train is slowing down."

Jack tried to shove the sliding door open, but it wouldn't budge an inch.

"I can't open the door," he said in an anxious, excited tone.

"Can't you? I'll help you," said Sam.

Their united efforts did not produce any effect on the door.

"I guess the door is fastened on the outside," said Sam.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Jack. "Those rascals made sure that I wouldn't get out if I got free from the rope. Now what am I going to do? I can't get out at Duncansville. Maybe I can attract the attention of a brakeman by pounding on the door."

"Don't do that," cried Sam earnestly. "The trainmen are awfully rough fellows. If they caught us in here they'd pound the life out of us for stealing a ride from Battersby."

"I could explain how I was put in here gagged and bound by three ex-convicts."

"They wouldn't believe you."

"But the rope is in here to prove it."

"That wouldn't make any difference. They're down on anybody stealing a ride in a car. I've been up against them and know all about it."

"But I want to head off those crooks."

"Maybe this car will be dropped off at the next town."

"You mean Bardstown?"

"I don't know the names of the places along the line. If you say the next place is Bardstown you ought to know."

While the boys were arguing the train started up again, and was soon running at a higher speed than before, so Jack gave up all idea of getting off at Duncansville.

CHAPTER X.—In Which Sam Explains Why He Left His Home.

"How far did you say Bardstown was from Duncansville?" asked Sam.

"About twelve miles."

"It will take this freight over half an hour to make it, so let's sit down and finish our talk."

"Let's have another try at the door and see if we can open it," said Jack.

"No use. It's fastened on the outside."

"Then I won't be able to get out at Bardstown when we get there," said Jack, now more anxious than ever to make his escape from his predicament. "There's a door on the opposite side. I'm going to try that."

He did, but found it just as tight as the other.

"This is fierce," said Jack. "There's no saying how long we may be in this car, or how far we may go in it."

"I hope it goes to Moorhead," said Sam.

"Why, that's a hundred miles or more away," cried Jack, aghast at the prospect of being carried such a long distance from his home.

"Ho! A hundred miles ain't much. Think how far I've traveled since I left Boston."

"Is that where your folks live?"

"That's where my father and step-mother live."

"And your brother is out in Tanglefoot, Montana?"

"That's right."

"Did he send for you to come out there?"

"No."

"Then why did you start to go out to him?"

"Tired of stopping home. My step-mother and I don't hitch well."

"Don't you like her?"

"Not much, and she doesn't like me for sour pickles."

"Wasn't she kind to you?"

"I should say not! She's got no use for me."

"What did your father say about it?"

"He sided in with her. When she told him to beat me, which was every day or two, he did it. I got tired of leading a dog's life, so one morning I just skipped out and started shank's mare for Tanglefoot."

"Did you expect to walk the whole distance?" cried Jack in astonishment. "It must be nearly 3,000 miles from Boston."

"No, I expected to ride whenever I got the chance."

"Did you get much-chance?"

"Oh, yes. I picked up rides on farm wagons, and sometimes on freight trains at night. I've been thrown off the cars several times, and once nearly had my neck broke. The train hands make you jump while the cars are in motion whenever they catch you."

"But you might get killed."

"They ain't worrying about that."

"You must have had a strenuous time of it since you left Boston."

"You can bet your life I've had a lively time; but I've managed to get away out here in Minnesota just the same. When I reach Moorhead and cross the Red River I'll only have to cover North Dakota and a part of Montana to reach my destination."

"What will your brother say when he sees you?"

"Give it up. He likes me, though, and I guess he'll do the right thing."

"How old is your brother?"

"About twenty-eight."

"You say he's prospecting for silver?"

"Yes."

"Does he expect to find a mine and get rich?"

"No, he's prospecting for a company who owns a lot of land near the Snake River."

"Oh, I see. He's working on a salary."

"That's right. If he finds paying ore he'll get a good job with the company. Say, you don't know but there might be silver on your land. There is lots of it along the Snake River."

"If there should be any silver on my property it would belong to Mr. Prior."

"Why would it? The ground is yours now, isn't it?"

"Yes. But he wouldn't have given it to me if he had had any idea there was silver in the ground."

"That's his funeral, not yours. Besides, you saved his life, and that's worth more to him than all the silver in the world. My brother would be able to tell if there was any silver there or not. Do you know the exact boundaries of your land?"

"No; but my mother expects to receive a survey of the ground through Squire Bates, of our village, from Dawson City, giving full particulars. The deed was sent out there to be recorded."

"Well, when you get it send me word about your property, care of my brother, Richard Wells, Tanglefoot, and maybe I can find out whether there is any silver on your property or not."

"I'll do it," replied Jack.

Sam then declared that he felt too sleepy to talk any longer.

"Better turn over and take a snooze yourself," he said. "No use worrying yourself about getting out at Bardstown, for you can't do it with the doors fast on the outside. Take your hard luck coolly. If this car is dropped off at some place along the line a railroad hand is bound to open it up after a time, then we'll both have to skip out, and skip lively, too."

"But suppose I'm carried clear to Moorhead, how can I get back without money?"

"Send a letter to your mother for the price of a ticket and your expenses."

"My mother must be worried to death about me by this time. She hasn't seen me since yesterday morning after breakfast. Mr. Whalen, the man I work for, is also wondering why I failed to return from my errand. Nobody will know that I was carried away by those crooks and locked up in this freight car. It will take several hours for this car to reach Moorhead if it goes there. Then it may be hours before a railroad hand comes to open the door, so we'll stand a good chance of starving to death in here."

The freight now slowed down and came to a short stop at Bardstown. The greater part of the train remained on the main track while the locomotive picked up several cars and dropped off one. While this was going on Sam fell asleep. Jack couldn't take things so easy, though he was weary enough after the events through which he had passed, with lack of his customary rest. His anxiety about the future kept him awake. He made several more fruitless attempts to open the car door, and finally had to abandon all efforts in that direction.

He sat down to consider the situation. There seemed to be very little chance of the ex-convicts being captured through any move on his part. They were either waiting at Duncansville for the early local to take them East or they were on their way by road to Bardstown, where he figured the freight now was. In either case they stood a good chance of getting clear off. While Jack was thinking the matter over his eyes closed, and when the train resumed its way westward a short time afterward he was sleeping as soundly as Sam.

CHAPTER XI.—In Which Jack and Sam Engage to Travel with a Magician.

The freight had a long run between Bardstown and Cressey, and morning dawned before half the distance was covered. At six the train went on a siding to wait for the westbound express to pass. An hour later it took a siding to wait for the early local, that was following it, to go by, and the train crew got their breakfast at the station eating-house. Eight o'clock found the freight passing through a stretch of farming country, and then it was that the two boys woke up. The sunlight was sifting through the crack under one of the doors. Enough light came into the car to enable the boys to get a good look at each other, and the inspection was satisfactory to both. Sam produced enough food from his pockets to afford both a fairly satisfactory meal, and they sat with their backs propped up against the rear end of the car and talked as though they had known one another all their lives.

There were long and short stops at intervals. Cars were picked up and cars were dropped, but the one in which the boys were free passengers went on whenever the train did. A stop was made about one o'clock at Clinton, where the crew got their dinner. Jack and Sam would gladly have sat down to a square meal, too, if the chance had been offered them. After that the afternoon wore away until four o'clock came, and then the long train rumbled into the Moorhead freight yard,

where it came to a stop for good. Jack and Sam were half famished by this time.

"I guess we have reached the end of our journey," said Sam after they had waited a long time in vain for the cars to go on.

The noise of puffing yard engines and the shouts of men confirmed this idea.

"Then we ought to make an effort to attract somebody's attention so that we can get let out of here," said Jack. "There's some men talking outside."

They both commenced banging at the car door with their shoes and fists. This attracted attention and the door was pushed back. Jack and Sam made a simultaneous spring and landed on the ground. Then they took to their heels and got out of the yard as soon as they could. The first thing they did was to make a bee-line for a cheap restaurant, where they filled up at Jack's expense.

"The next thing is to find a lodging for the night," said Sam.

"As I've only got enough money left to pay for a telegraph message to my mother, I guess we'll have to walk the streets all night," replied Jack.

"We will—like fun," answered Sam. "I've always managed to find a bunk somewhere of a night since I left home, whether I had the price or not, so I guess I can connect with a sleeping-place for both of us in this burg. We'll hunt up a telegraphic office first so that you can get your message off, then we'll take a look around."

After the message was sent Jack breathed easier, though his finances were reduced to a solitary nickel. He picked up the Moorhead "Evening Journal" in the telegraphic office, which somebody had thrown away, and the boys sat on a bench and looked it over.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Jack, pointing to a brief chronicling the sudden death of a well-known Minneapolis lawyer. "Mr. Prior, the man whose life I saved, dropped dead from heart failure in his office this morning."

"You don't mean it!" ejaculated Sam.

"Well, it's in this paper. Read it for yourself."

Sam read the press dispatch and was convinced.

"He didn't last long after you saved him, did he?"

"Not very long," replied Jack, who was sorry to hear of the lawyer's death. "His fainting fits must have been caused by his weak heart."

"Here's something that ought to interest you, Jack," said Sam.

"What is it?"

"New and rich discoveries of silver ore along the Snake River in Blank County, Montana," read Sam. "The whole of the country along the north bank of the Snake River, within a radius of ten miles of Tanglefoot, is believed to be honey-combed with undeveloped veins of a high grade of silver ore. The property in that vicinity is being bought up at high prices by agents of different silver interests already established in the State, and prospectors are at work locating the ore beds with a view of opening up new mines. How is that, Jack? Isn't it enough to make your mouth water? You ought to go right out there with me and look after your property, even if you had to walk there. Who knows but you are this moment the owner of a rich silver mine?"

Sam's words and the encouraging newspaper article about the new discoveries of silver ore on the Snake River greatly excited Jack. The mere prospect that there might be a silver mine on his property set his boyish blood tingling through his veins. Sam was just as enthusiastic about the matter.

"My brother will soon find out whether there is silver on your property or not," he said. "Why not go out there with me? It isn't so far from here. We ought to be able to sneak a ride across North Dakota somehow on the P. D. & Q. Then we'll have only about a hundred miles further to go to reach Tanglefoot. You may not have such a chance again in a hurry. You ought to be on the spot under the circumstances. You can't tell but somebody might jump your property and steal your ore."

"How could they, when we've got a deed to the land?"

"They could do a great deal with money at their back. You'd have to fight them in court to get your rights, and those men could hold you off by all sorts of tricks. This is done every day."

There might have been a grain of truth in Sam's remarks, but his real object was to try and get Jack, to whom he had taken a great fancy, to accompany him out to Tanglefoot.

"Well, shall we start West in the morning together?" he persisted, striking the iron while it was hot.

"I'd like to, but I can't, Sam. My mother is already worried enough about me."

"She'll know you're all right as soon as she gets your telegram in the morning."

"That's all right. I couldn't help coming as far as this. I came here against my will. She'll send me enough money to pay my way back."

"You don't have to go back in a hurry. As long as she knows you're out here she'll feel all right about you and won't worry. You can send her a letter telling her about the silver discoveries near your property. Cut this article out of the paper and enclose it. Tell her you are going there to find out whether there is silver on your ground or not. Tell her you're going with me, and that I have a brother in Tanglefoot who is a prospector and will look into the matter for you."

Sam could argue like a lawyer when he had a point to play, and he was determined to have Jack go with him if he could manage it any way at all. His specious arguments, coupled with Jack's strong desire to visit his property under the prevailing conditions; had his friend wavering between what he considered his duty and his inclination. Evening came on apace while the two boys sat on a bench in the telegraph office talking the matter over. While the argument went on Sam's sharp ears overheard a portion of a conversation between two telegraph messengers who sat next to him on the same bench. They were speaking about an advertisement that one of them had clipped from the afternoon paper. The advertiser was a sleight-of-hand performer, who wanted two boys to travel with him out West. The two messengers declared that they wished they could apply for the jobs. At that moment one of them was called to the desk to carry out a telegram. Sam, who was at no loss for nerve, turned to the other boy and asked him about the matter he and his companion had been discussing.

The messenger handed him the advertisement to read. It ran as follows:

WANTED—Two boys to accompany a magician on his tour of the towns along the line of the P. D. & Q. Railroad. Experience not necessary. Good wages and all expenses. Apply to PROFESSOR GUMBINO, Moorhead House, between 7 and 9 P. M.

"Gee! That would just suit me and my friend here," said Sam with sparkling eyes.

"Why don't you apply to the professor, then?" said the messenger.

"I will if you don't mind letting me have the advertisement."

"You're welcome to it," said the boy, handing it over.

"Say, Jack, here's just the thing for us," whispered Sam, his voice trembling with excited anticipation. "Here's a fine chance to get to Montana in style without the trip costing us a cent. Read that."

Sam handed him the advertisement.

"It's a chance in a thousand," continued Sam. "Just think of it—good wages and all expenses. Why, it will be a regular snap for us. Let's go and see the professor right off before somebody else gets ahead of us. He'll provide us with a bed tonight, and we won't have to worry about breakfast in the morning. This is a regular windfall. Just as if it was made on purpose for us two."

It was certainly a very tempting proposition and Sam used it to clinch his purpose. He kept up a rapid-fire talk about the fine time they were bound to have on the way to Montana.

"At the nearest point to Tanglefoot we can resign our jobs and go right to the Snake River district. You needn't stay but a week if you're anxious to get back home, and by that time you will find out whether there is silver on your land or not. I'll get my brother as a special favor to look into the matter for you." Then the wages you'll get from the professor while we're with him will pay your way home. Whether you find silver on your property or not, you'll have had the time of your life, and your friends in Battersby will all take their hats off to you because you've been away out in Montana and they haven't."

So Sam argued away without giving Jack much time to think, and the result was he carried his point, to his great satisfaction. They inquired their way to the Moorhead House, which was not far. At the office they asked for Professor Gumbino and were shown to his room.

"Come in answer to my advertisement?" asked the magician, who was a small, foxy-looking individual, with sharp, coal-black eyes, a tremendous mustache and imperial to correspond, and dressed in a loud suit of clothes.

"Yes, replied Sam.

"Got your parents' consent to travel?"

"Ain't got none in town," replied Sam glibly.

"Where do you live?" asked the magician sharply.

"I live in Boston when I'm home. He lives in Battersby, this state.

"What are you two doing here?" asked the professor suspiciously.

"Nothing in particular. We want to get West."

We've down to hard-pan. Haven't even got the price of a meal or a bed. Do we get the job?"

Sam's go-as-you-please manner caught on with the magician, and he said he would take them on.

Sam appeared to be delighted. He had no idea of letting the magician know that they intended to desert him in Montana, for that would bar them from getting the jobs they were after. Jack was going to say something, but Sam hit him in the ribs as a signal to keep his mouth shut, and so the arrangement was concluded. The professor registered them at the hotel and they were given a room together. They took possession of it at once, at the magician's suggestion, for he said they would take an early train West immediately after breakfast in the morning.

CHAPTER XII.—On the Road With a Show.

The moment Jack was committed to the adventure all his hesitation and reluctance to proceed further West vanished. Before he accompanied Sam to their room he went to the reading-room of the hotel and wrote a long explanatory letter to his mother, in which he enclosed the newspaper clipping about the silver discoveries on the Snake River in the vicinity of Tanglefoot. He told her what a rascal his father's brother was, and described all that had happened to him from the moment he was taken prisoner in the old sawmill.

Then he informed her that he and his new friend, Sam Wells, were going to leave in the morning for Tanglefoot, Montana, in the employ of a traveling conjuror, who had agreed to defray their traveling expenses and give them \$5 a week each for their services. He finished by saying that he expected to be back home inside of a few weeks, and begged her not to worry about him, as he felt quite able to look after himself anywhere and under any circumstances. The professor, whose real name was Sol Harris, and who was only a third-rate prestidigitator, had explained their general duties to the boys in his room after engaging them.

He had a partner who acted as advance man for the show. This individual, whose name was John Buncomb, had departed two days before to make the necessary arrangements en route, such as hiring the halls, or other suitable places, for his partner to perform in; putting out the posters and small bills; getting professional rates at the cheapest hotels, and working the newspaper editors for advance notices and other favors. Jack was to sell tickets in the box-office up to eight o'clock, which Sam was to collect at the door, and then go around to the professor and act as his assistant on the stage or platform, while Sam took the cash from the late comers.

Both boys were to help Harris unpack and pack up his apparatus, which was not very extensive or complicated. As the jumps between towns were short, as a rule, the boys were told that they would have to put in their spare time helping to advertise the night's performance by acting as "animated sandwiches" upon the principal streets.

Altogether, the "professor" proposed to make them earn their wages and expenses. On the following morning the party started for Sterling, a small town in North Dakota within two hours by rail of Moorhead.

They reached their destination about eleven, and the first thing that the boys saw on leaving the station was a three-sheet poster announcing that "Professor Gumbino, the world-renowned prestidigitator, would appear that evening in Scrubbs' Hall in his astonishing and mystifying exposition of the black art." The bill went on to state that Professor Gumbino had every noted magician in the business beaten to a standstill. That his marvelous tricks with cards bordered on the weird and supernatural. That what he couldn't do in his line wasn't worth mentioning, and a whole lot more to the same effect.

One large trunk containing the paraphernalia for the show, and one small one containing Harris's "duds," were taken to the hotel. The boys were permitted to amuse themselves any way they chose until after dinner, while the professor called on the proprietor of the hall to introduce himself and learn what the chances were of a good crowd that night. After dinner Harris put the sandwich signs on the lads and sent them parading the business and other streets, with directions to leave the signs at the hall at five o'clock and return to the hotel for supper. At half-past seven Jack was in the box-office and Sam on the door. By eight a hundred people had paid for admission to the hall, the prices being 50 and 25 cents.

Jack then shut up the box-office and went back to the small stage. A pianist, engaged by Buncomb, furnished music, and after he had played the overture from "William Tell," Professor Gumbino made his bow before the audience. Sam, who, from his position at the door, where he had nothing to do after the show began, had a full view of the performance, and told Jack later on that the professor's exhibition was a "weird" one. Some of the spectators must have agreed with him, for they dropped out before the performance was over and failed to return. All Jack had to do was to hand the magician various articles when called on to do so, and to look preternaturally solemn and impressed by the professor's ability.

After the show was over he and Sam packed up the apparatus and carried the trunk back to the hotel between them. That was a sample of the way the boys employed their time during the next three weeks, during which they followed the line of the P. D. & Q. Railroad across North Dakota, and covered nearly 200 miles westward in Montana. Sol Harris regarded his two young employees as prize packages, and congratulated himself on their acquisition. They were not quite as well pleased with him, as he failed to ante up their \$5 wages apiece when pay day came around. He handed them small sums of money now and then when they absolutely needed it to buy fresh linen and other necessary things, and purchased them a small grip each to carry their newly acquired belongings in, but that was the extent of his liberality.

"I guess he's afraid to pay us for fear we might give him French leave," said Sam one night after they had retired to their room in the cheap car-vansary where the party put up. "He owes us nearly \$9 apiece now. The dickens knows how much would be coming to us if we kept on according to his programme."

"We ought to be somewhere within striking distance of Tanglefoot and the Snake River now,"

replied Jack, who was eager to cut loose from the professor.

"We are. I've been making inquiries right along. Tomorrow morning we go to Pawling. That's the nearest point on the railroad to our destination. From there it is thirty-five miles in a straight line to the Snake River, and Tanglefoot is fifteen miles further on up the River."

"Then we'll light out at Pawling?" said Jack with satisfaction.

"That's what we will," replied Sam. "We'll start directly after dinner. Nothing like beginning operations on a full stomach."

"We'll have to walk the fifty miles, I suppose," said Jack.

"I don't know that we will," answered Sam. "I never walk if I can ride."

"I'd prefer to ride myself. I wish we could get some of the money due us. We ought to strike Harris for a couple of dollars, at any rate. We need it."

"I've been trying to pull his leg for a week, and all he would cough cough up was two quarters. He says business is bad."

"It isn't any worse than his performance. He takes in enough to pay us just as well as not."

"I know he does; but it would hurt his professional conscience to part with a cent more than he can help. He'd beat the hotels quicker than Jersey lightning if he could get his trunks to the station on the sly."

"What will he do without us?"

"What do we care what he does without us? He hasn't kept his agreement, so we are not obliged to keep ours."

"He'll have a fit."

"I won't worry if he has two fits. No sandwiches for us to-morrow afternoon. While he thinks we are stalking around town we'll be making tracks for the Snake River."

"I'll have to write another letter to my mother at Pawling and let her know that you and I will soon be at Tanglefoot," said Jack.

"There's nothing to stop you doing it if you've got the price of a two-cent stamp in your jeans to prepay it," grinned Sam.

"I've got nearly a dollar."

"And I've got forty cents."

"How will I raise the money to get back home?"

"My brother will loan it to you."

"All right. I'll send it back to him as soon as I get to Battersby."

As it was now midnight the boys turned in and were soon asleep. Next morning they left for Pawling at 8:15, and arrived in that town at 10:30. The posters and bills announcing the show were, as usual, all over town. The boys had nothing to do between the time they reached the hotel and dinner hour, and they put it in making inquiries respecting their journey to Tanglefoot.

After dinner they struck the professor for money, and after putting up a stiff argument they got a dollar apiece, for Harris didn't like their attitude, and was afraid they might do exactly what they were contemplating—leave him in the lurch. Their sandwich signs were at the hall waiting for them. The boys wouldn't have put them on, only Harris walked with them to the hall. However, they met at a certain corner half an hour later.

"We'll leave them in that saloon across the way," said Sam.

"All right," agreed Jack.

They crossed over and entered the saloon. At the door they came face to face with a good-looking young man of nearly thirty. As Sam's eyes rested on his face he gave a gasp.

"Dick," he cried, rushing forward, "don't you know me?"

The young man looked amazed for a moment, then he said:

"In the name of common sense, how did you get here, Sam?"

The young stranger was Sam's brother, the prospector.

CHAPTER XIII.—In Which Jack Learns That He Owns Silver Property.

"How did I get here? Hoofed it a small part of the way, got a lift on a wagon now and then, and beat the railroad when I wasn't fired off the cars," replied Sam.

"What! All the way from Boston?"

"Yes, all the way from Boston."

"I needn't ask whether you ran away from home or not," smiled Dick Wells.

"Yes, I ran away, all right."

"I thought so. I was going to send for you in a few days, for I've got an opening for you with our company."

"That's first-rate."

"How did you leave father and Mrs. Wells?"

"They were both well and hearty. By the way, let me introduce you to my particular friend, Jack Stone. Jack, this is my brother, Dick."

"Glad to know you, young man," said the prospector, shaking Jack by the hand. "Do you know that name seems familiar to me."

"How is that?" asked Jack.

"Why, a namesake of yours owns quite a bit of land up on the Snake River, near Tanglefoot. An agent of our company has just gone to Battersby, Minnesota, where he lives to buy the property from him."

"That so?" replied Jack, kicking Sam as he was about to open his mouth. "Why did your company want to buy his land?"

"Because I traced a valuable vein of silver ore through his property. The whole north bank of the Snake River within a dozen miles of Tanglefoot is alive with silver. Our company has bought up all around the Stone land, and it is very important that we should get that, too."

"Then I suppose the company is willing to give a big price for the ground?"

"The company won't give any more than it can help."

"What would you sell it for if you owned it?"

"I wouldn't sell it."

"What would you do with it—mine the ore yourself?"

"I'd form an independent company, capitalize it at a million at least, keep a controlling interest in the stock and sell the balance to open up the mine with."

"Thanks, Mr. Wells. I think I will follow your advice," replied Jack coolly.

"Follow my advice! What do you mean?"

"I happen to be the owner of that property."

"You happen to be the owner of the property?"

"Exactly. It's owned by Jack Stone, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm Jack Stone, from Battersby, come out to look the ground over. I am very much obliged to you for the information you've given me. It is nothing more than I expected from you, though, as Sam said you'd do the right thing by me."

Dick Wells looked paralyzed. He glanced from Jack to his brother utterly unable to say another word. Sam was grinning like a fiend.

"Gee! But he pumped you good, Brother Dick. He's Jack Stone, all right, and the owner of that property. So you've found silver ore on his land. I thought you would. I got him to come out here on purpose to look into the matter. We saw an article in a Moorhead paper which said that new discoveries of silver ore had been made all around Tanglefoot on the north side of the river. I was sure it would be found on his ground. Now is your chance, Dick, to stand in with my friend. He'll do the right thing by you if you help him to open up his mine."

"But our company intends to buy the land," replied Dick.

"How can the company buy it if Jack won't sell? You told him just now that you wouldn't sell it if you owned it. That you'd form an independent company, and all that. You've given him a valuable pointer. Help him form the company or he'll do it through somebody else. He's my friend. I'm going to stick by him, and I advise you to do the same."

"The company will be greatly disappointed if it doesn't get his land."

"That isn't worrying him."

"If I go in with him and form a company I'll have to be well taken care of, for the Snake River Silver Company will bounce me quicker than lightning."

"Do you think my property is worth a million?" asked Jack.

"In my opinion it is easily worth that and more," replied Dick Wells.

"I suppose the Snake River Silver Company does not expect to pay as much as that for it," said Jack.

"Well, hardly. The company has acquired most of the land at bargain rates, and expects to get your property equally cheap, as you being an outsider, are not supposed to have any accurate idea of its value."

"You have been employed by the Snake River Silver Company to prospect the Tanglefoot neighborhood and figure on the ore-bearing indications of the land?"

"That's right," nodded Dick Wells.

"And you have found that there is lots of silver in the ground?"

"I have."

"I think you said that you traced a rich vein of the ore through my land."

"Yes."

"Do you think my property as valuable as any held by the Snake River Company?"

"Fully so."

"You think it would pay to form an independent company and mine the ore on a business basis?"

"I am satisfied that it would pay well."

"Will you go in with me and help form a company for that purpose?"

"I will, provided I am allowed a substantial interest in the undertaking," said Dick Wells.

"What do you consider a substantial interest?" asked Jack.

"I couldn't tell you off-hand. I have been frank with you because in the first place you obtained certain admissions from me before I knew that you were really the owner of the property, and secondly because you appear to be a friend of my brother, Sam, and he is clearly pledged in your favor. There is a third reason, too, and that is it would be greatly to my interest to stand in with you if you are willing to do the right thing by me."

"I'll deal fairly by you. I'll submit facts and figures, together with my proposition, to any responsible person you may select to represent your interests. I am stopping at the Pawling House, and have nothing on my hands for a week or ten days. If you mean business we'll get together right away and lick the project into shape."

"All right," replied Jack. "The sooner we take the matter up the better, as I am out here practically on my uppers. I am sorry to say that \$1.90 represents my entire cash resources at this moment. I am going to write to my mother at once, explaining how things are and ask her to send me on sufficient funds to carry me along. If you will guarantee my expenses at the hotel until I get the remittance I will consider it a great favor."

"I will loan you \$50. Will that do?" said Dick Wells, taking a fat roll from his pocket.

"I don't think I will need more than half of that," replied Jack.

"You'd better take that amount. There might be some delay in your getting money from home, and it is better to have a little too much than too little."

He handed Jack five \$10 bills, and the boy thanked him for the loan.

"Now we'll go to the Pawling House. I'll introduce you both to the proprietor. Now that you're here, Sam, I'll have to look after you until your future movements are decided on."

"All right, Dick, I'm willing to be looked after," grinned Sam. "Jack, I guess we'd better take these signs back to the hall and leave them there. When we get to the Pawling House we can send our resignations to Harris, and ask him to cough up what he owes us, though he's not likely to do it."

Dick Wells regarded with no little curiosity the signs the boys carried under their arms.

"What have you got there?" he asked his brother.

"These," said Sam, "are advertising matter belonging to Professor Gumbino, the celebrated Fakir from Fakirsvills. We have been working for him for three weeks."

"Professor Gumbino, eh? I've seen his posters. He's a traveling magician, I believe, who shows in the hall here to-night."

"That's right, Dick. He's a first-class fraud, for he owes Jack and me \$8 apiece back wages."

"Then I should advise you to attach his box-office receipts to-night. If he has any kind of a house you ought to be able to get your money."

"That isn't a bad idea, Jack. Let's do it. He owes us the money and we need it."

"I'll take you boys around to a magistrate," said Dick Wells. "You can tell him your story and the sheriff will attend to the rest."

Jack agreed to go and off they started for the court house, for Pawling was the county seat. On the way Sam recounted to his brother how he and Jack had come together, and the adventures they had been through since that time. Jack supplemented Sam's story with his own from the time he was caught by the crooks in the old saw-mill until they left him gagged and bound in the empty freight car on the siding at Battersby.

Dick Wells agreed that his brother and Jack had had a rather strenuous time of it both immediately before and after their meeting. An attachment was sworn out against Sol Harris, professionally known as Professor Gumbino, and it was given to the sheriff to serve. Dick Wells then took the boys to the Pawling House, where they registered and were assigned a room. The next thing they did was to write and send in their resignations as employees to Sol Harris.

CHAPTER XIV.—Which Treats of the Formation of the Yellowstone.

If there was a madder man in Pawling than Sol Harris when he got the notes of his late assistants the fact has not been recorded. He rushed around to the Pawling House to interview the boys, but found that they were out. He then discovered to his astonishment that they were actually guests of the Pawling House, the best hotel in town. He proceeded to pump the clerk and learned that Sam was the brother of a well-known copper mining expert who was stopping at the same hotel. Apparently the boys had run against unexpected luck and had decided to shake the show business. Harris began to realize that there wasn't much chance of getting them back. However, he didn't propose to pay up the \$16 he owed them, and he hustled around to hire a man for the door and a boy to assist him on the platform.

There had been a dearth of amusement in Pawling of late, and consequently Professor Gumbino had a full house that evening. This put him in good humor until the news was brought to him that the sheriff had levied on the receipts to the tune of \$16 to satisfy the claims of his late assistants. Harris put up a big squeal, but it didn't do him any good. Sooner than remain over in Pawling to defend a losing case he yielded up the coin, and the boys got their money, while the sheriff collected his fee from Harris.

That wound up Jack and Sam's connection with the show business for good and all. Dick Wells lost no time in collecting data and laying out the plans for the formation of the Yellowstone Silver Mining Company. While he was thus employed Jack and Sam amused themselves about Pawling. On the fifth day of their stay Jack received a long letter from his mother, containing a postal order for \$50. After telling him of the trouble and anxiety his unexplained absence from home had occasioned her until she received his Moorhead despatch, she went on to inform him about the robbery of the home of the Misses Reynolds.

Cash bonds and silver plate to the value of \$20,000 had been taken by the burglars, who had got clear off. Detectives in Chicago, New York and other chief cities had been communicated with and were on the lookout for the rascals. She was

glad, she said, that nobody suspected that her late husband's brother was one of those implicated in the crime, but she feared the fact would come out if the men were arrested and brought back for trial. She expressed great surprise as well as joy over Jack's statement that his Montana property promised to turn out extremely valuable. Indeed, she suspected it was worth a great deal more than the late Mr. Prior had valued it at, for a stranger had called on her a couple of days before and made flattering overtures to her to dispose of the land. She had turned his liberal offer down, as she told him she merely held it in trust for her son, and could not think of selling it without his knowledge and consent. Jack was delighted to hear from his mother, and was particularly pleased with a postscript added in Dicky Locke's own hand, in which she said many pert things that tickled him immensely. As soon as Mr. Wells had his plan in shape Jack went over it with him, and was satisfied from his own point of view that it was all right. He decided, however, to submit it to Squire Bates for his advice and approval.

He forwarded the documents, together with a letter containing added explanations, to the Battersby lawyer, with the request that if he thought well of the scheme that he would act as his legal adviser for the present and subsequently accept the office as regular attorney for the new company. Squire Bates was rather surprised on receiving the papers and Jack's letter, but that was nothing to his astonishment on learning that the discovery of silver ore on Jack's property had practically made the lad a rich boy. After going carefully over the documents he thought so well of the enterprise that he packed his grip and came on to Pawling at once, where he met Jack and was introduced to Dick Wells.

After a long interview with the mining expert he decided to visit Jack's property and so the party went on to Tanglefoot. After the squire had gone over the ground he approved of the plans drawn up by Dick Wells for the formation of the new company. The corporation was to be capitalized at a figure that would give Jack a controlling interest of over \$1,000,000, as well as the office of president. Dick Wells was to get a \$100,000 interest and the post of general manager, while Sam was to be taken care of in a suitable way.

Jack and Mr. Wells were to go to New York and put the stock of the new company on the market, that is, enough of it to form a fair working capital. When the Snake River Silver Company got wind of what was going on the president sent for Jack and offered him half a million in the stock of that corporation for his property rights, but the boy refused the offer. The offer was subsequently raised to three-quarters of a million, but Jack would not consider it. He, Dick Wells and Squire Bates, together with a capitalist of Pawling, acted as incorporators of the new company, and the Yellowstone Silver Mining Company became an established fact.

Jack and his general manager went to New York and opened an office on Broad Street for the sale of the stock. The Pawling capitalist furnished the money to push the enterprise through, and in return received a large extra block of the stock in recognition of his assistance. The result was that the money was raised to buy the necessary

machinery, put up the needed buildings, and hire a force of men to open up the mine. After that the Yellowstone Silver Mining Company was satisfied to demonstrate its statements by results. Now that the company was actually on a working basis, Jack did not care to figure merely as an ornament and sit a few hours a day in the main offices at Pawling in luxuriant ease as the well-dressed and well-paid president, as he was entitled to do.

"Time enough for that by and by," he said to his general manager. "I am thoroughly interested in silver mining. I am going to be on the ground and take the position as assistant manager under you, Mr. Wells. I am going to don a blue shirt and old clothes and learn the mining business from the ground floor up. Have you any objection to that?"

"None whatever," replied Dick Wells.

So it came to pass that when operations opened up late in the following spring Jack was well grounded in a general knowledge of silver mining. Then, as assistant to Dick Wells, he took hold from the start-off and began to learn by practice how silver was got out of the earth, smelted and transported to Pawling, and thence East by rail. During all this time Jack continued to chum in his spare time with Sam Wells, who was made a time-keeper and general assistant at the mine.

CHAPTER XV.—In Which There is Trouble to Burn.

The Yellowstone Silver Mining Company was surrounded on three sides by the property of the Snake River Silver Company, but the fourth side fronted on the river. The only way the company could ship its output of ore was by water—eighteen miles down the river to a town called Hanover, on the south bank, whence it had to be carried thirty-five miles by wagon to Pawling, on the railroad. This method of transportation was of no more disadvantage to Jack Stone's company than it was to the Snake River Company, since that corporation had to follow the same means of getting its ore to Pawling.

The large amount of ore now being shipped, with the prospect of it being doubled in the near future, induced the P. D. & Q. Railroad to begin the construction of a branch line to Hanover, which, when completed, would greatly simplify and reduce the cost of forwarding the silver product of the Snake River district. The Snake River Silver Company, it may well be imagined, entertained no kindly feelings toward its new rival, the Yellowstone Company.

The officials in the first place had been much chagrined because they were not able to acquire the Stone property, the possession of which they had counted on, and they now resorted to other unfair schemes to embarrass the Yellowstone people. Jack, however, had a wonderfully smart manager in Dick Wells. He knew the Snake River people from the ground floor up, having been in their confidence before he seceded to the new corporation. He was, therefore, better able to block their schemes than a new man. The officials of the Snake River Company at last put their heads together and decided that they could make no head-

way against the Yellowstone Company until some means was found for getting its general manager out of the way, for a while, at least.

A scheme to that effect was devised, and one fine morning in summer Dick Wells failed to appear at the mine. A message, apparently in his handwriting, was received by Jack from Pawling, informing him that Mr. Wells had been unexpectedly called to New York by Vice-President Shrewsbury, who was in the city at the time. The management of the mine therefore devolved on Jack for the time being, and the responsibilities of the position were very heavy for a boy of his limited experience. Jack, however, was a boy of pure grit—in a class by himself—and he possessed good executive powers that only required developing. As soon as Dick Wells was out of the way the opposition bunch began to make trouble for the Yellowstone Silver Mine. The fact that Vice-President Shrewsbury was in New York was of great advantage to them. They had only Jack to deal with, and they did not expect to be blocked by a mere boy. Some new men applied for work at the Yellowstone mine, and the foreman, being shorthanded, took them on.

Inside of twenty-four hours Jack saw signs of trouble among his employees. Setting Sam to watch and investigate he found out that the new hands were fomenting discord and dissatisfaction among the other men. He took the bull by the horns at once and ordered the foreman to discharge the new hands. The newcomers refused to go and called on the other miners for their support. They had worked their cards so well during the short time they had been at work that they had secured quite a following, who now showed a readiness to sympathize with the fellows. The result was that a third of the miners quit work and demanded that the discharged men should be reinstated. Jack was in the power-house at the time of the outbreak. The first notice he had of serious trouble was when Sam rushed into the building in a state of great excitement.

"There is the dickens to pay, Jack," he said.

"What's the matter?" asked the young president and acting manager.

"Matter enough, I should say. Those chaps you ordered discharged have not only refused to quit, but they have appealed to the rest of the miners to back up their demand for reinstatement, and a whole lot of the men have stopped work and joined them."

"Then the matter looks serious; but if they think I'm going to back down they are mightily mistaken. I'm running this mine, not my employees."

"It's too bad my brother is away in New York," said Sam, who looked very much disturbed.

"Well, it can't be helped, though his sudden departure, without a word of instruction or advice, looks a bit odd to me."

"It does that," replied Sam. "He never said a word to me about going anywhere, not even to Pawling. It isn't like Dick to act that way."

Jack immediately left the power-house and walked over to the mouth of the shaft, where he saw a crowd of the men engaged in loud and angry conversation.

"Well, what's the trouble?" asked Jack, confronting the men who had stopped work.

"Look here, young fellow," said the leader of

the malcontents, one of the chaps who had been discharged, "I want to know why I and my pals were discharged? You ain't got no right to fire us without cause, and we don't propose to put up with it, d'ye understand?" and the speaker shook his fist threateningly at the boy.

"You were discharged because you were making trouble among the men," replied Jack. "Apparently you came to the mine for that purpose. Well, we don't want persons of your stamp in our employ, so the quicker you go the better."

"He says he don't want persons of our stamp in his employ. Did you hear that?"

"Aye! Aye! Aye!" roared the mob angrily.

"We'll take him down to the river, duck him well and then send him adrift in a cask," said the leader.

Before Jack could make a move to defend himself a dozen hands had seized him.

"Fetch that piece of wood yonder, and somebody get a rope," said the leader. "We'll ride him down hill on a rail. If we had only a pot of tar and some feathers we'd do the thing up brown."

In spite of Jack's resistance he was lifted across the thick piece of wood, such as was used to shore up the sides and roof of the tunnels in the mine, and bound to it. Then a dozen of the excited miners lifted the rail and started for the river, followed by the howling mob.

CHAPTER XVI.—Conclusion.

It looked even to Jack himself as if he was in for a strenuous experience. The miners were enraged at the way he had called them down, and they intended to get square with the young president of the company. The ducking they had in view was meant to be a good one. They didn't intend to set him adrift in the barrel until he was half dead. What the consequences would be to themselves afterward when he returned with force sufficient to make them walk a chalk-line they didn't consider at the moment. Sam Wells had followed Jack out of the power-house. He had no suspicion that the miners would dare to lay hands on the president of the company. When he saw the angry men seize Jack and tie him to the rail he was staggered. He saw he could not cope with the crowd, so he rushed back to the power-house and called on the engineer and fireman for aid. They ran to the door.

"What do they mean to do with Mr. Stone?" asked the engineer.

"I heard them say that they were going to duck him and afterward set him adrift on the river in a barrel," replied Sam. "They are going to carry him down the hill on that piece of wood."

"I think they need a bath themselves, and a pretty hot one," said the engineer. "Here, Mike," to the fireman, "just attach the hose on to the hot water faucet, and then we'll give those chaps a warm ducking. We'll make them drop their prisoner, and when they do you run up, Sam, and cut him loose."

"All right," replied Sam gleefully.

The easiest way to get down the hill from the shaft was near the power-house, and soon the men with the rail started, followed by the yelling crowd. The engineer and fireman lay in wait for them, and as soon as they were well within reach they opened the hose on the entire mob, taking care not to touch Jack. The stream of boiling

water caused a panic in the ranks of the miners, and all but those in charge of the rail fell back in great confusion. Then the engineer began peppering those furthest from Jack back and front. Those hit by the hot water dropped their hold on the rail mighty sudden and fled. The others began to retreat with their prisoner. Seeing that, the engineer took more chances and deluged those nearer Jack. His aim was good and soon only four men were left close to the boy whom the engineer did not dare try for. Sam and the fireman then sprang forward to the rescue, and the engineer covered their advance with the hot water. The crowd did not have the nerve to brave the parboiling in order to carry out their purpose, so Sam and the fireman managed to get Jack off the rail, and the moment they did the engineer turned the hot stream on the last four miners, who uttered wild yells and hustled to get out of reach.

As the furious miners were holding a pow-wow as to what course they should adopt next, a hatless and coatless man suddenly appeared on the scene from behind the main building, where the office of the company was. Sam and Jack stared at him in astonishment, for the newcomer proved to be Dick Wells.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, confronting the malcontents, who were standing near the mouth of the shaft.

Jack stepped up and explained in a few words what had happened. Dick had no gun, but he had a manner that enforced obedience. Inside of two minutes the five miners who had begun the trouble were deserted by their late sympathizers, and were prisoners. They were bound and locked up in a room of one of the buildings, and the trouble was at an end.

"I thought you were on the road to New York, Mr. Wells," said Jack.

Then Dick Wells told how he had been kidnapped three nights before by a masked party of men, who had held him prisoner in a house some miles away. He had just managed to give his captors the slip, but not before he found out that they were working in the interest of the Snake River Silver Company. That afternoon the ringleader of the late trouble sent for Dick Wells and confessed that the rival silver company had paid them to come over and break up operations at the Yellowstone mine and do all the damage they could. A case was made out against the Snake River people—the president, secretary and general manager were prosecuted for criminal conspiracy and sent to State prison in spite of the influence and money exerted in their behalf by their friends. It was about this time that Jack received word from his mother that Edward Stone and his two pals had been arrested in Chicago and brought to Bardstown, the county seat, to stand trial for the robbery of the Misses Reynolds's home.

All the bonds stolen from the sisters were recovered, but none of the plate or money. The rascals were tried, convicted and got fifteen years each. The Yellowstone Silver Mining Company and is today one of the best in that line in Montana.

Next week's issue will contain "BULLING THE MARKET; OR, THE ERRAND BOY WHO WORKED A CORNER."

TRUE GRIT

or

An Engineer at Eighteen

By Gaston Garne

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XIX.—(continued)

Once or twice he came to a dead stop, and then, reluctant to abandon the only plan he had to depend on, continued to advance a bit further.

Suddenly as he turned a bend in the passage he saw bright shafts of light painting strange, weird, white figures on the stone wall.

With a shout of joy, which he could not repress, he dashed forward, pulled the bushes aside and looked out on the identical scene Bunker had presented for his inspection.

For a moment he hung motionless over that chasm, the moon shining full on his boyish face, while he drank in the invigorating breath of the cool night air.

How sweet it was!

The doubts and apprehensions of the past quarter of an hour had melted away like the mist before the rising sun.

He felt strong in his resolutions to rescue Myrtle Kent.

The poor girl, what must not she be suffering at that moment!

Now that he was embarked in this enterprise, he would save her if need be at the cost of his life.

Fully braced for this ticklish venture, he proceeded to walk along the few yards which separated him from the cave.

At length he reached the end of the passage. The cave was just around the corner of the rock.

Down he went on his hands and knees and crawled with infinite care till he had thrust his head around the projecting stone.

It was dark, of course. He had expected that. But the moonlight was strong outside, and the opening of the cave showed in bright relief, so that anything that came between his eyes and that opening was silhouetted or brought out into bold outline.

At length Bob made out what he guessed was the figure of Myrtle sitting in the same corner which had originally been assigned to her. Not another living creature could he see. But his watchful ears detected the sound of voices outside which told him that the ruffians were not many yards away.

How could he attract Myrtle's notice without causing her to cry out and thus defeat the whole project?

She believed him to be miles away at that moment. He must find some way to let her know that he was near her.

"Myrtle!" he whispered loudly. "Myrtle, it is I—Bob!"

He saw the girl move.

"Myrtle, don't you know my voice? I am Bob!"

A suppressed scream followed the announcement, and the figure half rose to her feet.

Almost immediately a dark form had showed itself at the cave entrance and a rough voice growled:

"What's the trouble, little gal? Have you been dreamin' about the winder?"

Myrtle sank back as before and soon the head vanished.

"Come over here, Myrtle. I'm going to take you away. Don't be afraid. I did not go to the Glen at all."

At last Miss Kent seemed to understand the situation, and with a sob of joy she crept over to where Bob crouched in the darkness, and he gathered her at once in his arms, just as though she were his sister, and he had the right, and kissed her tenderly. And she clung to him, as a drowning man would to a plank, and made no objection to his caresses. Truly this day had marked a most eventful period in the lives of these two young people—one a lowly employee of a well-known railroad company, the other the only child of one of the company's legal head-lights.

"Come, Myrtle there is not a moment to lose if we are to get away in safety."

Thus speaking, he bade her follow after him, with one hand on his shoulder for a guide, and in this order they made their way along the underground passage until, after what seemed a full hour's walk—yet they had covered but a third of that time—they reached the foot of the incline where Bob had made his descent in so undignified a way.

Bob took off his shoes and helped Myrtle to do the same. It was the only safe way to overcome the slippery character of the rock. He put his shoes in his pockets and tied hers together, so they would hang about her neck.

Then they commenced the long climb for safety and freedom.

If Bob found the way rocky and toilsome, how much harder was it to the delicate girl? Yet not once did she utter a word of complaint, though her poor little feet must have suffered terribly from the unequalities of the rocky plain.

But the end in view was worth all the pain and trouble that it cost them to win their way out.

Here and there, as Bob's judgment suggested, they paused for rest and breath, but their anxiety to place a safe distance between them and pursuit caused them to tarry the least possible time.

"Oh, Bob, shall we never get out of this frightful place?" cried Myrtle.

It seemed to her as if she could not go a step further to save her life.

"Another effort I hope will take us out, Myrtle. At any rate, we cannot now be very far from the surface."

Thus he cheered her on to make the effort that finally took them out of the subterranean lane, and once more the sky, brilliant with stars and the light of a glorious moon, was above their heads, and the pure, sweet mountain air, heavy with the scent of pines, played about their heated faces.

Having replaced their shoes on their feet, Bob and Myrtle struck out along the short-cut Bunker had pointed out to the Glen below.

Not a moment was lost in getting beyond the danger line.

Myrtle's clothes suffered much from the branches of the stunted trees that crossed their path, but a torn dress had no place in the balance against their lives.

CHAPTER XX.

Promoted to the Express.

At last they could see the lights of the Glen House below, and the sight cheered them both greatly.

It was nine o'clock when the three or four loungers at that resort were surprised by the appearance of the very much dilapidated boy and girl on the veranda.

Bob turned Myrtle over to the landlady and then, while the girl's horse was being saddled, he entertained the landlord and the others to a brief review of their exciting adventure of the afternoon and evening.

The club had gone back to Rushville, the members much mystified by the absence of Bob and Miss Kent. Bruce Hardy, his sister and Bessie Blake had remained behind and waited for at least two hours for the wanderers to appear.

Finally convinced something was wrong, a search of the gorge and springs had been made without result. Then Bruce decided that they had better return to Rushville, and he would consult with Judge Kent as to what further steps ought to be taken.

Then Bob and Myrtle, satisfied that they would meet the judge and others on their way home, started for Rushville.

Myrtle was now unusually silent and reserved, and Bob guessed pretty accurately what she was thinking about.

Not far from the railroad they came upon Judge Kent in a buggy, with several horsemen in attendance. They were coming to hunt for the missing ones.

Of course that was unnecessary now, and after the meeting the party turned back.

Myrtle got into the buggy and told the story to her father, whose indignation was extreme. He determined to leave no effort undone to run the Bunker crowd to earth.

Later on the judge very feelingly thanked the young fireman for saving his daughter from perhaps death by the runaway, as well as for Myrtle's rescue from the clutches of the train-wreckers. And, of course, in this he was joined by his wife. As for Myrtle herself, she had little to say, but the look which accompanied the placing of her little hand in the boy's big one, told her feelings more eloquently than all the big words in an unabridged dictionary could have expressed it.

Next morning Sheriff Wood got a big posse together and started on the trail of the Bunkerites, but, astonishing to say, they were not to be found anywhere in the mountains, so far as the efforts of the sheriff's officers could discover. They seemed to have disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed them up. At any rate, it was to be hoped that the vicinity was well rid of them.

On the following afternoon Bob went down to the railroad yard to have a talk with some of his

friends. There was nothing for him to do until engine Thirty-three returned from Vinol. Practically, he had been granted a three days' vacation.

"Hello, Blake," said the foreman of the round-house, as soon as he recognized the young fireman; "Mr. Singleton wants to see you. You'll find him in his office."

"All right, sir," and Bob made his way to the office of the master mechanic.

He was admitted to the private office, where Mr. Singleton was busy writing at his desk.

"Well, young man," said the master mechanic presently; "I see you've had another run-in with those wreckers, whom we've been trying to catch and supposed had escaped from the State."

"Yes, sir."

"Your rescue of Judge Kent's daughter from these fellows' clutches was, in my opinion, a remarkable exhibition of courage and tact. The judge has become particularly interested in you since you saved the night express at Lone Tree Point, and now he has additional reason to feel under obligations to you."

"I only did my duty, sir."

"And no one could have done better," said the master mechanic. "You're firing on Thirty-three, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's a freight. How long have you been an her?"

"About two months, sir."

"That was old Beckley's engine, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"I remember now. He died at his post the night after the Lone Tree Point affair, and you took charge till the Bunker crowd got possession of the train, tied you to the pilot and sent the train wild down the mountain, believing it would smash into the express after it had passed Paradise. You averted that catastrophe. Now, Bob, how would you like to go onto the day express?"

"Very much, sir," said the boy, in pleased surprise.

"All right. Report tomorrow morning at the round-house at 7.30. You'll go out on Ninety-nine."

Mr. Singleton turned to his desk, which was a sign that he had nothing more to say, therefore Bob took his leave.

Naturally, the young fireman was delighted at his promotion to the cab of the day express. It was another step forward in his career toward the top of the ladder.

Some day he expected to be an engineer, and with that end in view he was improving every opportunity to make himself capable to fill so important a post.

He intended that the words "thoroughly reliable" should stand against his name in the master mechanic's office from the day he first assumed charge of the throttle.

An employee who does not drink, swear, or, for that matter, use tobacco in any form, is always appreciated by a railroad company, provided, of course, that he thoroughly understands his business.

Many boys think it looks manly to acquire such habits, or they are so weak as to yield to the force of ridicule.

Bob had a good mother and he was proud to

acknowledge that whatever success he made was really due to her advice and encouragement.

No boy can go wrong who respects the line of duty his mother points out to him.

Chet King had early noticed the weak points in his mother's character, and quickly took advantage of the chance to cut loose from the parental apron-string.

He always had a sneer for the boy who believed in his mother, and it was along those lines he first clashed with Bob Blake.

Chet had the advantage of wealth to look forward to, but the disadvantage of a slack bringing up.

CHAPTER XXI.

Within an Inch of His Life.

"So you're Bob Blake!" were the first words Ralph Crewe, the engineer of Ninety-nine, said to our young fireman, when the boy returned to the cab after oiling up the drivers.

The engine was still in the round-house, and the lad had been getting her ready for the trip to Vinol.

Bob didn't like the tone in which those words were uttered, nor the expression of the man's face. The introduction was not favorable. It looked as if there would be friction in their association, and that was bad to begin with for the fireman.

"Yes, sir, that is my name, all right," replied Bob pleasantly.

He was determined to give the engineer no cause for complaint.

"You're the fellow who has the reputation of havin' saved the night express at the viaduct in Long View Valley, aren't you?"

"That's true," answered the lad.

"And you were tied to the pilot of old Thirty-three when she was sent wild down the mountains between Rocky Gulch and Paradise, and narrowly escaped a collision with the express, eh?"

"Yes, sir, you've got it correct."

"I suppose you think that you're a big thing, eh?" said the man with a sneer.

"No, sir, I haven't considered the matter in that light."

"Old Singleton wouldn't have put a boy like you on this engine if somebody had not worked a pull in your favor."

"I'm sorry that's your idea. I don't see where my pull comes in."

"Don't you?" said the engineer snappishly; "well I do. You saved Judge Kent's daughter from the clutches of the Bunker crowd. That makes you solid with him, doesn't it? Well, he had you promoted as a kind of payment for what you did."

"I hope not. I don't want to be paid for that kind of service," said Bob stoutly.

"You expect me to believe that, do you? Well, it's too thin. However, since you've been put on this engine, you've got to work, d'ye understand? I won't stand no shirkin'. If you don't 'tend to business right up to the handle I'll report you. I won't stand for no kid glove dude on Ninety-nine. Now, get out there and oil up, or I'll freshen your

way with a kick that you won't forget in a hurry."

Bob turned on the engineer with a look of indignation.

"Look here, Mr. Crewe, I'm not in the habit of being spoken to in this way. I understand my work and expect to perform it to your satisfaction, as I have on Thirty-three. You have no right to abuse me for nothing at all. The engine is all ready for you to run out on the table."

"You infernal little monkey, don't you tell me what I shall do, and what I shan't do! Just you do as you're told, or there's goin' to be trouble, mark my word!"

Ralph Crewe gave him a furious look, but Bob didn't wince. No engineer was going to bully him without cause. He was a lad of spirit and knew his rights.

Just then the foreman came up and told Crewe it was time to get a move on, so the engineer ran Ninety-nine out on the table, whence she was switched to the right track, and she moved down toward the depot, and was coupled onto the train which was scheduled to leave Rushville for the West at eight o'clock.

Promptly on the second the train dispatcher's gong sounded, the conductor cried "All aboard!" and gave the signal, and the day express started on its journey.

Crewe curled up in his seat and seemed to pay no more attention to Bob. The boy understood his duties and faithfully discharged them. He kept steam well up in the gauge, and didn't leave a loophole for the engineer to find fault.

At nine o'clock the express crossed the bridges at Long View Valley, and as they entered the ravine Crewe spoke to his fireman for the first time since pulling out of the depot.

"I believe you and Chet King don't hitch well," he said, with a furtive glance at the lad.

The remark took Bob completely by surprise.

"Are you a friend of Chet King's?" he asked curiously.

"I know him," replied the engineer evasively. "He's a good fellow. Spends his money like a little man. Isn't afraid to take a glass of somethin' of the right sort once in a while when he meets a friend. And he aren't no slouch with his dukes, either," significantly. "If I were you I wouldn't go up ag'in him, he might spoil your face," with a hard grin.

Bob made no remark at this dig. He thought he was able to look after himself. He wasn't a boy who hunted for trouble in order to show off, but he knew how to meet it if it came his way.

"I don't mind givin' you a bit of advice, though we did have a scrap before we started out," said Crewe. "Just you quit buttin' in 'tween Chet King and Miss Myrtle Kent, or somethin' unpleasant might happen to you, see?"

"Did Chet King tell you to pass such a message on to me?" asked Bob.

"Never you mind whether he did or didn't. You'd better take heed if you know when you're well off."

"If it's the same to you, Mr. Crewe," said Bob coldly, "let us talk about something else."

(To Be Continued.)

Fame and Fortune Weekly

NEW YORK, APRIL 23, 1926

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Publisher, Inc.,
166 W. 23d St., N. Y.

Harry E. Wolff, Pres.
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ITEMS OF INTEREST

CHE MAH, 'SMALLEST MAN IN WORLD,' DIES AT 88.

Che Mah, midget who became wealthy through being exhibited as the "smallest man in the world," died at the age of eighty-eight in Chicago, March 21. He was twenty-eight inches in stature, and wore a queue thirteen feet long.

Brought to the United States from the Island of Choo Sang by the late P. T. Barnam in 1881, Che Mah was for a long time in the employ of the famous showman. In 1890 he retired at Knox, Ind. He is survived by a son, living in Brooklyn.

Che Mah was married twice, both of his wives having been American. His son, born of the first marriage is of normal size. His first wife died many years ago and, in 1921, he filed suit for divorce from the second on the ground of abandonment.

CHORUS OF 5,000 WILL SING FOR AUDIENCE OF 200,000

A mighty chorus of five thousand voices will commemorate in song the deeds of the patriots of the country, when on July 5 the Chorus of the States and the Festival Chorus will sing before President Coolidge and an audience of more than 200,000 at the Stadium in Philadelphia as one of the features of the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition, to be held from June 1 to December 1.

The plans for this elaborate musical program as outlined by Dr. Herbert J. Tily, chairman of the Music Committee, indicate that this chorus will be the greatest ever heard in this country. Every state in the Union will be represented in this assemblage.

AMERICAN SQUIRREL VIES WITH SPARROW IN REGENT'S PARK

The steady increase in the number of American grey squirrels in London prompts a writer in "The London Mail" to say that the sparrows have to detach sentinels to halt the squirrels when they seek to raid food desired by the birds.

It is more than twenty years since the first

detachment of squirrels played truant from the Zoo and found that in Regent's Park they could thrive and multiply in a free state, says "The Mail." Now they have broken through the ring of houses and found their way into remote corners of Kent, Sussex and other parts of the country. Those in the central colony at Regent's Park still keep going, picking up a hand-to-mouth living in some mysterious way.

Their bright eyes and flashing, gracegug movements tempt many crumbs from children. Then there are dried seeds, as well as early shoots, to nibble just now. They also have been caught in the act of digging up small bulbs, such as crocus and daffodil. Soon there will be birds' eggs to steal.

Raids on the bird tables spread by kindly folk in their gardens are another source of supplies. One squirrel has been seen to burgle a hanging cocoanut intended for the tits. There was a little clever tight-rope work, some trickery with the wire and the little thief had his head inside, hanging on the tough, white meat.

In very severe weather, such as we have just experienced, grey squirrels appear partly to hibernate, solving their food problems by prolonged slumber. There was not a specimen to be seen in the park during the hard frost and thick snow, but now there are plenty.

Statement of the ownership, management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of "FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY," published weekly at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1926. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared A. A. Warford, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Editor of "FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY," and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor and business manager are: Publisher—Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y. Editor—A. A. Warford, 166 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y. Managing Editor—None. Business Manager—None.

2. That the owners are: Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y.; Harry E. Wolff, 166 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y.; M. N. Wolff, 166 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y.; J. F. Desbecker, 166 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y.; R. W. Desbecker, 166 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y.; C. W. Hastings, 166 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities are: None.

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A. A. WARFORD, Editor.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 25th day of March, 1926. Seymour W. Steiner. (My Commission expires March 30, 1926.)

A SCOUT FAILS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE

On the 14th of April, 1867, I left Fort Hays, Kansas, to carry a note to the men at Lookout Station, nineteen miles away, telling them to beware of the Indians. The red villains had cut loose all along the Smoky Hill route, and were thirsting for blood. All the stage stations, with one or two exceptions, were prepared for Indian attacks—that is, each station was garrisoned by three men, armed with the best weapons, and the building was bullet proof. As a further security the men dug for themselves a circular hole in the ground, covered it over with timbers and earth, and by firing from the loopholes could stand off any number of Indians. This dugout had an underground passage from the stable, and was always stocked with water and food.

Lookout Station was one of the exceptions. Why a dugout had not been provided I don't now recollect, but it was because of this negligence that I was sent out from the fort. I was then in Government service as a scout, and was paid for carrying my scalp to any point convenient for the Indians to take it. Within fifty miles of Fort Hays there were at least 1,000 Sioux and Cheyennes on the warpath. Between the fort and Lookout Station I might encounter a hundred. On that day thirty warriors had come within five miles of the post, and indulged in yells of defiance.

I left the fort soon after dark, mounted on a genuine Mexican mustang and armed with a sixteen-shooter and a revolver. While the direct route was bad enough for any traveler, I had to plan for a worse one.

My only hope of getting through would be to avoid the traveled line. I got well away, and then took my bearings to keep a route about five miles to the left of the stage road. This would take me over some very bad pieces of country, but prudence commanded this policy. I knew when I set out that I would be all night in the saddle, as the ground would be too broken to permit of a fast pace, and up to midnight, when I had made a distance of ten miles in the right direction, the mustang had scarcely broken his walk. It came on pretty dark, with ugly clouds driving across the sky, and every few minutes there was a gust of wind which had a warning in it. While all my senses were keen and alert, I depended much on my horse. He had campaigned in Mexico, and would be the first to detect "signs." It was about midnight when he suddenly stopped dead still and threw up his head. That meant Indians.

The next minute was an hour long. Then came a gust of wind, singing and sighing over the barren plains, and it brought to my ear the footfalls of horses. They came from the direction I was headed, and would pass very near me. No two dangers have the same situation. It might have been a good plan to dismount it and lead my animal to the right or the left. I judged it best to dismount and remain perfectly quiet. All men who have studied the Indian will tell you that his eye is quick to detect a moving object, and that his sense of hearing is wonderfully acute. Even in the darkness they might see us moving,

and if the horse's foot struck a stone, the sound would certainly reach them. The company of the mustang was better than that of the oldest scout on the plains. I stood with one hand on his neck, and he was as firm as a rock. He realized the peril as fully as I did, and I believe he reasoned something like this:

"Those persons who are approaching are Indians. The slightest noise will betray us. We must remain perfectly quiet in hopes they will pass. If discovered, we will run for it."

In two minutes after receiving the first alarm the first Indian was up with us, and not over thirty feet away. They were not riding in single file, but by twos, threes and fours, with the evident purpose of making as broad a trail as possible. I could see every pony and warrior, and every instant I expected to see some movement to prove that we were discovered. The ponies were on the walk, and there were forty-two Indians in the band. I believe they were four or five minutes in passing, and during every second of this time, if my horse had lifted a foot, champed his bit, or flung his head, the sound would have betrayed us. It did not seem possible that we were thus to escape, and when the band had finally disappeared in the darkness, I was not certain but there was some trick behind it. I climbed softly into the saddle, and let the mustang pick his own way, and it was a full half hour before I was satisfied that we were not followed.

We soon got into a very bad spot, cut up in all directions with gullies and washouts, and our progress was slow. The mustang naturally picked out the best route, and about an hour before daylight I suddenly discovered that we were on the stage road. There were no coaches running then except at long intervals, when a strong escort could be had, while the Indians were riding over the route at all hours. I dared not travel it, but pulled off to the left again, and as a consequence daylight came while I was yet a mile and a half from the station. It was not yet fully light, and I was settling myself in the saddle for a gallop to the station, when I heard the yells of Indians in that direction. That settled it. They were there before me, and my peril was now far greater than that of the men I started out to save. They were three in number, and had the shelter of a stout log hut. I was alone and on the open plains.

To have pushed on meant the loss of my scalp; to attempt to return to Fort Hays meant the same thing. I had only a couple of minutes to think, and there was only one chance of escape. There was a big washout close at hand, and I led the mustang into it, and made him lie down. When I sat down beside him we were concealed from the sight of anyone passing a quarter of a mile away, and there we must put in the day without food or water. I hadn't brought so much as a mouthful of meat with me, depending on reaching the station by daylight, and there wasn't a drop of water within a mile of us. We were scarcely settled down before the station was vigorously attacked, and I estimated the number of Indians to be not less than fifty. The three men were not surprised, though they had but slight warning. They were provided with sixteen-shooters and revolvers, and they returned the fire with vigor.

The Indians must have known that this station was not provided with a dugout, for they had come prepared to burn it. The forage for the stage horses had to be kept within, and its inflammable nature gave the savages a pointer to work on. It was an unfortunate thing, also, that the lay of the ground gave them cover to creep up within bow-shot. For three or four hours there was scarcely a lull in the firing, and during the time, as was afterward ascertained, four or five Indians were killed, and a still larger number wounded. When the redskins realized that the hut would be defended against their rifles they sent men forward with prepared arrows, and in the course of half an hour fired the building. Then their yells were terrific. I could have seen them by climbing to the edge of the washout, but I feared to leave the mustang alone.

The three men cooped up had no show whatever after the flames took hold. The Indians formed a circle about the station, and it was death within and without. It was expected that the men would rush forth when the heat became unbearable, and orders were issued to seek to take them alive.

About noon the Indians prepared to retreat, and now a most curious thing happened. The mustang had been very quiet, lying on his side, and scarcely moving a leg. I sat by his head, knife in hand, and fully determined to cut his throat if he attempted to get up. I sat facing the west, and all at once heard the gallop of a horse. Next moment an Indian warrior appeared to view. He turned to the right to avoid the sink, half encircled me, and disappeared in the east. I saw him look me full in the face, but he came and went so suddenly that I was dumb with astonishment. I supposed I was discovered, but the thud of his pony's feet grew fainter and finally died away in the east. With rifle in hand I crept to the top of the sink, and I could see the savage a mile away, riding to join a small band. I stood looking after him, head and shoulders above the sink, when seven other Indians, coming from the west, passed me not over twenty rods away.

My heart stood still for the moment, for it seemed that all were looking straight at me, but they galloped on after the other and left me undisturbed. Several years later I met the one who almost rode into the sink. His name was Man-Afraid-of-the-Water, and he assured me in the most solemn manner that I must have been dreaming, as he would have been certain to see even a rabbit in the washout. I also met one of the other warriors, and he had the politeness to hint that I must have been drunk. Still, everything happened just as I have described.

I gave the Indians an hour to get out of sight, and then abandoned the sink and rode down to the station. The house was still burning, and at that time, as I could see nothing of the men, I supposed they had been carried off. After I left several settlers reached the spot, found their bodies, and gave them burial. My mission was accomplished and my orders were to return to the fort. Between me and the post was a full band of bloodthirsty Indians, and an attempt at progress in the daytime was foolhardy.

I secured water for myself and the mustang, and then struck off to the north for a mile and descended into a dry gulch filled with sage brush. Here was pretty fair shelter if we lay close, but

I had not been there five minutes when I discovered the corpses of four Indians, all still warm, who had been killed in the fight. No attempt had been made to bury them, but they were rolled under the bushes, legs straightened out, arms folded across the breast, and all their weapons left with them. On inspecting their rifles, which were new, I made the discovery that the maker of the weapons wanted to accommodate the savages without doing the white folks any particular injury. The front sights were so far out of true with the hind sights that no one could have hit a cow ten yards off. Each one of the Indians had received a ball in the breast, and each one was of middle age. I made a bundle of their weapons to carry to the fort, and although four corpses are not pleasant company to one in hiding, I was obliged to put up with them for the rest of the day.

Just before sunset seven Indians passed on the stage road going west, and from the terrific pace of their ponies I judged they were after reinforcements. As soon as night had fairly set in I led the mustang out of the ravine and mounted and set off, not daring to go near water for fear of an ambush. I planned to keep to the left of the road about a mile, and I got along without incident until about midnight. I was then riding at a lope, using eyes and ears to the best advantage, when the mustang suddenly stopped. It could mean only one thing. I slid out of the saddle and put my ear to the ground, and after a minute I heard human footsteps. They came from the east, and I knew they were made by a white man having boots or shoes on. I stood at the mustang's head, when out of the gloom of midnight a human figure walked directly up to us. I was satisfied that he was white, and uttered a hist! which halted him scarcely five feet away. He uttered a groan as he came to a stop, and I softly inquired:

"White or red?"

"White!" he eagerly answered.

It was a settler named George Robinson, whose wife and children had been butchered and his buildings burned. He himself had been wounded by Indian bullets in the hand and shoulder, and had been three days trying to get to Fort Hays. Pain and fright had so unnerved him that he lost his bearings, and had the fort been only a mile away he would have missed it. He was suffering from hunger and thirst as well as his hurts. We soon found water in a hole, and I spent half an hour getting him in shape to ride. Then I took the lead and he followed on the mustang, and I kept a pace which brought us to the post just after sunrise. We did not see nor hear anything to alarm us on the way. A fog came on just before daylight, and hung thickly over the country until after sunrise. We made the last three miles under cover of this fog, and as we reached the sentinel and were challenged the corporal who came hurrying up gasped out:

"Good heavens! But how did you do it?"

"What?"

"Why, there are two hundred redskins around us!"

The fog had no sooner lifted than the savages were seen riding about, taunting and defying us. We had come through their lines unharmed, never suspecting how close we were to capture and death.

FROM EVERYWHERE

GEM-STUFFED POULTRY USED IN SMUGGLING.

Geese and chickens stuffed with precious stones and other valuables have been passing between Leningrad, Moscow and other large cities in Soviet Russia as part of a regular smuggling system.

Eighteen smugglers were arrested for their part in the affair, which the authorities say has been going on for many months, yielding great profits.

Besides precious stones, mother of pearl and other merchandise of small bulk and considerable value were sent in the poultry consignments.

TESTING TROUSERS.

How many times can a man sit down without wearing out the seat of his trousers?

A definite answer to this really important question now can be obtained in round numbers from a novel textile-testing machine devised by the United States Bureau of Standards to measure and durability of cloth used in making army uniforms, according to Popular Science Monthly.

When applied recently to a new quality of cloth for army trousers, it was found that the wearer could sit down 97,000 times before the cloth showed the least sign of wearing through.

ALL-GLASS HOUSES.

Shall we all live in glass houses some day? A. G. Shieds, an Ohio inventor, claims to have found a way to make houses of glass, says Popular Science Monthly, at a cost 20 per cent. less than than of frame ones.

No paint, no plaster, no wallpaper. Soap and water would keep them clean and sanitary. For privacy's sake the glass is opaque and can be made in any color.

Mr. Shieds's invention is a machine that makes glass slabs three-eighths of an inch thick, thirty inches wide, and up to nine feet long. These are bolted to concrete foundations and screwed to a framework of wood.

CITY UNEARTHED NEAR MOSCOW; SHOWS STONE AGE TRANSITION

Russian archeologists have discovered on the outskirts of Moscow the remains of an ancient city, believed to date from the fifth century before Christ, when stone tools were just beginning to be replaced by metal implements.

Many iron arrows, knives, glass bracelets, bone combs and gold and silver jewelry were unearthed. Several examples of primitive pottery bearing designs for textiles also were found.

The main occupation of the inhabitants, the archaeologists say, was cattle breeding, hunting having played a minor role.

Traces of an ancient Kremlin also were excavated.

BENJAMIN RUSH, SIGNER.

Much of the credit for stamping out the yellow fever plague which ravaged Philadelphia in 1793 must be given to that distinguished physician, Benjamin Rush, one of the signers of the

Declaration of Independence, which will be commemorated by the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia, June 1 to December 1.

It has been estimated that he saved the lives of at least 6,000 people in Philadelphia, and is said to have treated as many as 100 persons in a single day. In the midst of deaths in his own family and those of his friends, he kept going night and day, sometimes fainting in the street from exhaustion.

Benjamin Rush was descended from one of Cromwell's officers who had come over to America. He was graduated from Princeton College when only sixteen years of age, and afterward studied medicine in Edinburgh, London and Paris.

At the age of twenty-four Benjamin Rush occupied the chair of chemistry in the medical school in Philadelphia, a member of one of the youngest faculties that ever sat in professors' chairs. Certain additions were made later to the institution, the oldest medical school in the country, and it was finally merged in the University of Pennsylvania.

This eminent physician of early American days was well known as an author and possessed a great talent for public discussion. Even while he was a student in London he was an earnest defender of the rights of American colonists.

In the fifth year of his professorship he became famous by his oration delivered before the Philosophical Society on the history of medicine among the Indians. He especially discussed the evils of the intemperate use of intoxicating spirits, which is probably the first instance of such a discussion in Philadelphia.

The address did much to make him one of the political leaders in the stirring times which were to come. He was elected to the Provincial Conference of Pennsylvania, and was afterward elevated to Congress, not long before the passage of the Declaration of Independence, which he signed with his father-in-law, Richard Stockton, of Princeton, whose daughter, Julia, he had married.

Shortly afterward he received the appointment of surgeon-general of the United States Army for the Middle Department. After about six months he was made physician-general.

When Benjamin Rush died in 1813, a contemporary paid him the following tribute: "The sensation throughout the whole country was intense. Everyone had heard of Dr. Rush, and all that were interested in medicine or philosophy, in common humanity or in the honor of their country, felt that they had lost a friend and benefactor."

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CURRENT NEWS

75 TO BE YOUTHFUL AGE, SAVANT
ASSERTS

Men and women 100 years old will be active in business and social affairs by 2026, it is predicted by Sir Kingsley Wood, Parliamentary Secretary to the British Ministry of Health.

"In the next century there is no doubt in my mind that the average expectation of life will be a hundred years, and a person of seventy-five will be regarded as comparatively young," said Sir Kingsley, who has recommended more physical exercise for members of the House of Commons.

"Good health and good temper go together," he contended, "and if the Members of Parliament took more exercise fewer members would be suspended and wild and excited scenes in the house would disappear."

GETS \$900 COYOTE BOUNTY.

That is the bill that three nimrods took to the Orleans County Supervisor at Albion.

Three prairie wolves were killed by George Hall of Altmar and Lewis McLean and Adam Norwich, both of Elba, in the Elba swamp near the county line between Genesee and Orleans, N. Y.

The price on the coyotes' heads was set by the Orleans Supervisors, who last year had to pay \$15,000 in claims to sheep owners whose flocks were harassed by the coyote band. The sheep killers are descendants of a tame pair brought to this section by an Indian woman several years ago.

The three hunters were the first to be successful among the scores seeking the high bounties. They have been hiding near a runway in the swamp each morning, and their patience was rewarded when a band of five passed quite close to them.

SEES WORLD HUNGRY IN 100 YEARS

The world must turn to science in its search for food, said Dr. Samuel C. Prescott in a lecture at Cambridge, Mass.

Doctor Prescott, head of the department of biology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said that unless new sources and more efficient methods of production and preservation were found or some method devised to synthesize foods from abundant cheap materials, the world would face a food shortage in the next century.

He predicted that the first great retrenchment in the world's food supply would come in meat, and that the present generation might live to see a great proportion of its meat coming from the Arctic region, with its reindeer and caribou, and from tropical countries, where goats and some type of cattle can be raised in large numbers.

Soy beans, peanuts and bananas may come to rank among the most important foods, consumption of fish will increase tremendously, and corn will be used more generally as human food. Land now used for cattle raising will be given over to intensive agriculture purposes.

HORDE OF GIANT RATS DEFY CREW OF
BIG SUBMARINE

The U. S. S. V-1, the largest of the navy's undersea vessels, which is at the submarine base, New London, Conn., undergoing a series of availability tests, is faced with the problem of ridding itself of rats.

The craft recently returned to this country from a 14,000 mile cruise in Southern waters, during the course of which stops were made at various Caribbean Sea and South American ports. It was at one of these points that the rats succeeded in getting aboard the craft. They are of the South American species, huge, long-tailed, up-turned nosed rodents and they have multiplied rapidly.

Officials are at a loss as to how to rid the ship of them. They cannot be poisoned, for they would then crawl away to die in the remote parts of the hull and in the partitions and it would be impossible to locate them. The rodents are wily creatures and have refused to be lured into traps of various types which members of the crew have set.

A clubbing party has been organized aboard the craft and members of the crew make daily sallies into the store-rooms and other compartments seeking out the rodents. Many of the rats have been killed in this manner, but no appreciable inroads have been made in the colony.

SAW-KNIFE OF 1500 B. C. IS UNEARTHED

The skeleton of an early Bronze Age man, period between 1500 and 2000 B. C., with flint tools permitting scientific classification of its antiquity, has been discovered in the Peak district of Derbyshire, England.

This discovery was made by W. Allan Milton of the British Archaeological Society, and F. A. Holmes "Fellow" of the Royal Geographical Society, during excavations among the tumuli in the Buxton neighborhood, and scientists regard it a confirmation of earlier finds indicating the presence of pre-historic man in this district.

The skeleton was that of a man five feet seven inches in height, and conforms to the peculiarities of other known specimens of human races at that period. Buried with the skeleton were some ancient tools, one a saw-knife three inches long and 3-4 inch wide, which experienced archaeologists regard as the best specimen of its kind yet found in Derbyshire. One side of this implement is pointed like a knife, and the other has twelve perfect serrations. The saw evidently was used to cut through the flesh of animals and the knife to pare off the skin.

As some tumuli in the neighborhood have been known to contain eighteen interments, Milton and Holmes are continuing their search, and are in hopes of unearthing pottery urns as the calcined bones of the dead were buried in the Bronze Age. The searchers have also found two Roman pottery eating vessels and a drinking cup unearthed at Sylvan Cliff, Buxton. The vessels are broken, but can be easily be pieced together, and are pronounced fine specimens of Roman work.

GOOD READING

KETTLE-DRUM PIANO

In spite of his amazing dexterity, the kettle-drum player in an orchestra needs even more agility to play all that is demanded of him in modern music scores. Professor Schneller, a noted kettle-drum player of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, is coming to the rescue with a kettle-drum piano that will operate eight drums of varying pitch, says Popular Science Monthly.

Even the most modern orchestras have at most four kettle-drums. With a piano keyboard arrangement the work of the drummer, it is claimed, would be lessened greatly. But would not the admiration of the audience also disappear?

READING BY SOUND

Teaching the blind to read by means of different shades of sound is a new and remarkable method invented by Professor Rosing, an oculist of Leningrad, Russia, says Popular Science Monthly. Every letter of the alphabet will be expressed by a different sound. So far, sounds have been contrived for eighteen letters of the alphabets.

The sounds are used, too, to see objects. Experiments showed, it is claimed, that children using the sound apparatus were able to define many articles in a room and recognize persons who were passing.

HUGE NEW KENTUCKY DAM

On a site selected nearly 150 years ago by Daniel Boone as among "many excellent mill sites" along Dix River, today stands the Dix River Dam, the largest rock-filled dam in the world and the highest of any kind east of the Rocky Mountains.

The hydro-electric plant at the dam is the latest unit in a nation-wide super-power transmission system. The dam impounds a lake 31 miles long, covering 3,000 acres and with an estimated capacity of 100,000,000,000 gallons of water.

The generators of the plant, three in number, utilizing 540,000 gallons of water a minute when running at capacity, develop 30,000 horsepower of electricity at 13,200 volts. At a transformer substation nearby the current is raised to 6,000 volts and transmitted to distributing stations in Kentucky, Indiana and Virginia. It cost \$7,000,000.

MAN'S INVENTIVE GENIUS ACTIVE IN LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

In the last twenty-five years, man has outstripped all other periods in the number and kind of his inventions and their practical application, says "Popular Mechanics."

A quarter of a century ago, no one had heard of the radio, submarines, war tanks, machine-guns, airplanes and wireless telephones as articles of almost daily service. The world then was doubting Marconi and the little group of men who believed in radio, while experimenters with airplanes were tolerated as amusing "cranks." Today, the roar of the mail planes daily is heard over the route of the old Pony Express, armies of the world fight in the air, and it is becoming the great highway for peace-time travel and shipping.

Important applications and changes have been made in old inventions. The reaper, for instance, was known nearly a century ago, but only in the last twenty-five years has it been combined with the thresher. Motion pictures, relaying photographs by radio, the use of radium and the X-ray, are achievements of the present century.

RICHARD STOCKTON, SIGNER

Thrown into the common prison in New York by a band of loyalists, and treated with the utmost severity during the Revolution, was the fate of Richard Stockton, of New Jersey, signer of the Declaration of Independence, to be commemorated by the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia, June 1 to December 1.

At the direction of Congress, General Washington remonstrated with General Howe, and Stockton was exchanged shortly afterward, but his health had been permanently impaired.

The New Jersey signer was born near Princeton in 1730. He was graduated from Princeton College, after which he studied law. When he visited Great Britain a few years later, he exerted himself especially to remove the prevailing ignorance regarding the American colonies. For a while he strove to effect a reconciliation between the colonies and the mother country and was silent for a time in the opening debates on the question of Independence. In the end, he expressed concurrence in the final vote and signed the Declaration.

Richard Stockton's library, one of the best in the country, was burned by the British when they occupied Princeton at the close of 1776, and his estate, called "Morven," in the suburbs of Princeton, was devastated. The portraits of the signer and his wife were pierced with bayonets. By these strokes of ill luck, and by the depreciation of Colonial currency, his fortunes were greatly diminished and he was forced to obtain help from friends.

As an eminent lawyer who became Judge of the Supreme Court of New Jersey, Richard Stockton became a valuable member of the Continental Congress to which he was elected in 1776. He signed the Declaration of Independence along with his distinguished son-in-law, Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, who had married his daughter Julia.

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